MOUSSIA *The Life And Death of* MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

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MOUSSIA: *The Life and Death of Marie Bashkirtseff*

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF
From a self-portrait.

MOUSSIA

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

BY

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Prologue

Marie Bashkirtseff!

One may or may not love this proud dead girl of whom her surviving friends made a figure of romance the while Maurice Barrès was preparing to give her the aureole of legend. One may or may not love Marie Bashkirtseff, but when one loves her one is in love with her, one loves as a lover.

Which Marie Bashkirtseff? The painter? The writer? The Slavic soul grafted on the French? The virgin? The young girl who, to realize her ethical and esthetic ideal, demanded of herself such purity, such white luminosity? One must love Marie Bashkirtseff entire or not at all, without making distinctions in her, without dividing her, because to divide her is to destroy her. She is one, despite her diversity and her contrasts, or she does not exist. She has a compelling charm along with prodigious faults, and if one attempted to efface or excuse the shadows

which annoy us in this picture, one would efface, at the same stroke, the whole portrait and its definite beauty.

What was she? What did she do?

She has done what is most difficult for the dead: she has lived on. Avid of homage, she certainly has today more than a hundred thousand lovers in all parts of a world familiar to her cosmopolitan soul. Many a man has within him a sort of little chapel in which the portrait of this girl is enshrined. Enamored of every culture, she maintains relations with the minds which she challenges on every page of her Diary. I have read, about her and against her, pages of excellent criticism. Exact and minute reproaches are brought against her. We wonder, why this posthumous celebrity which not many great men of today will attain? Why do we still read her? Why do we set her apart? Why does her Slavic cross dominate this bit of French earth which she seems imperiously to have made her own? Why so many floral tributes and touching little bouquets on memorial days and almost every day in the year? Why her marble statue in a museum of Nice—one of whose streets bears her name? Why, again and most

particularly, does this dead girl seem so much more enduring than many of our living immortals?

I shall not attempt to answer these questions. There are tasks which are not for the reasoning powers. We can minimize the importance of Marie Bashkirtseff if we remember only her uncompleted projects, her vanities, her childishness. Or we can think her very great if we consider principally her marvelous potentialities, or look upon her as a falling star leaving a glorious wake.

Outside the domain of the sensibilities, we will seek an explanation in vain. Reason is nothing where intuition and instinct are all. It is in ourselves that we must look to understand Marie Bashkirtseff, to love her, perhaps, to absolve her if we really think we have cause to reproach her. Marie is a black and white figure. She symbolizes these two dramas of our humanity: Life, Death. She is thought, delirium, love, pride, violence, defeat, triumph, construction and destruction, all that we are.

And if I am told that she was not a saint I shall reply that I prefer her so, for she resembles us better.

* * *

Prologue

Four years ago, one day in May, I had gone for a stroll in the cemetery of Passy. Swarms of creeping myrtles were beginning to peep, blue-eyed, through the grass. It was a rather sharp spring morning, between showers. Breezes wafted back and forth in the yews like voices. Not a step, in the green lanes, echoed my step. At that early hour there were no mourners around the graves.

Isolated, dominant, the chapel of Marie Bashkirtseff stood out from the verdure. A caretaker opened the door of the monument for me and I visited the tomb, the secret crypt. The passer-by, from the outside, can see the reconstructed studio corner, with the easels, the palettes, the stool, the familiar little objects, and at the rear Marie's great unfinished picture: "The Holy Women Before the Tomb of Christ."

When one enters the chapel one is struck by a drawing which hangs on the wall in a black frame with silver palms. It is the face of Marie Bashkirtseff lifeless, the eyes dull and half closed. Signed: "Gustave Courtois, Friday, October 31, 1884." In contrast with this chilling vision, there is on an altar table a delightful picture of Marie as a young girl,

face delicate and rosy, sunny hair, eye too thoughtful, arms and hands of an infinite grace.

One descends into the crypt by a stair which buries itself in the shadows. This May morning when I made my visit to the dead girl a boy marched before me with a flickering taper. He led me into the crypt, to the foot of a slab of white marble on which, quite simply, the name is inscribed. Around, dust of withered flowers, three-branched candlesticks with half consumed tapers which the boy relighted.

There was also a bust of the dead girl at the age of thirteen or fourteen, when she was writing in her Diary: "It seems to me that I am in this world for happiness; make me happy, oh my God!" The tapers burned with straight tall flames. I have rarely felt so strongly as in this funereal lodging the presence of the surviving soul. We are completely ignorant of death. "There is," Marie wrote, "a veil between me and the rest of the earth. If one knew what is beyond, but one does not know. Besides, it is this curiosity that shall make death less frightful for me." But she said again: "Oh when I think that we live only once and that every minute brings death nearer,

I go mad! I do not fear death, but life is so short that to squander it is infamous. It seems to me that nobody loves everything as I do; the arts, music, painting, books, society, clothes, luxury, noise, calm, laughter, sadness, melancholy, love, cold, sunshine, all the seasons, all the atmospheric states, the calm plains of Russia and the mountains around Naples; the snow in winter, the autumn rains, the spring and its follies, the tranquil days of summer and the beautiful nights with brilliant stars. I love and admire everything. Everything presents itself to me under interesting or sublime aspects. I should like to see everything, to have everything, to embrace everything, to lose myself in everything and die, since I must, in two years or thirty years; die with ecstasy to experience that last mystery, that end of all or that divine beginning."

I can still see the boy extinguish the tapers slowly, one by one. It seemed that at the same time I ceased to hear the murmur of the living confessions of the Diary. And nevertheless, as a last ray glided over the marble, these words came again to haunt my mind: "I dreamed that a coffin had been placed on my bed

and I was told that there was a young girl in it. And it shone resplendent like phosphorous in the night."

* * *

I had always had the desire to write a book about the shining figure of this dead girl. The surviving friends of the young Russian had encouraged me by permitting me to draw upon their treasures of correspondence and recollection. The unpublished pages of the Diary and of the intimate notebooks, collected by Monsieur Pierre Borel, began to appear, furnishing a supplement of information to which we turn today. Through this and the selection published by André Theuriet in 1887 have been revealed some secondary pieces formerly neglected, adolescent observations, notes and rough drafts whose documentary interest cannot be contested, but which, separated from the better part of the work and read alone, threaten to make one take the accessory for the essential. Reason the more, doubtless, and quite decisive, for trying to discover, in the union of all these elements, the true physiognomy. Nevertheless, I have long hesitated to attempt the portraiture.

It was Maurice Barrès who reassured me, decided me. We had our last interview in June, 1922, in his work room on the Boulevard Maillot. Her imperious individualism, detaching her from all limitations, makes Marie Bashkirtseff one of the intellectual race of Barrès, and Barrès had adopted the charming shade with a fraternal tenderness.

"You must," he said to me, "write this book of which you speak. Write it as you feel it. Write it for yourself, for me, for a few others. I once wanted to write this book myself."

"And you have written it: your 'Three Stations of Psychotherapy' . . . "

"Three articles."

"Which have revealed her to us, which have made us love her."

I quoted:

" *'This appealing girl . . . there are a few of us who cherish her in our imaginations, and, may I say, in our hearts. If twenty others have proclaimed a like fashion of conceiving life, they have not had this elect child's suppleness, spontaneity, vital sap. She, so young, had amalgamated five or six excep-*

tional souls in her too delicate and already ruptured breast.' "

"Yes, this vital girl was at every instant on the point of death."

" ' . . . *When she died she possessed in her brain the literature of four races, in her eyes all the museums and the finest landscapes, in her heart enthusiasm.'* "

"Her ardent youth, our ardent youth, the youth and ardor of us all."

"Ah, my dear master, that is the very epigraph for my book if I decide to write it."

"You will write it, with or without this epigraph, to please me and to please yourself. Restore the environment, the habits, the faces—the air which Marie breathed. Detailed studies, as I said in a letter to Madame Bashkirtseff the mother, mislead the public, enfeeble the impression by diluting it. A book of living synthesis would be required. Make that effort for her."

"If you would promise to look over the proofs with me. . . . "

"Why of course I will, my dear friend."

Maurice Barrès, the beloved and admired, who was so cruelly taken from our midst in the following year, was not able to keep this promise.

CHAPTER I

In Search of a Land, a Culture and a Sky

ACQUA-VIVA

AT the beginning of autumn 1872 a Russian family took the furnished villa *Acqua-Viva*, in Nice, number 57 *Promenade des Anglais*. There were an old gentleman, Monsieur Babanine; two young women, Madame Bashkirtseff and Madame Romanoff, his daughters; two young girls, Dina, fifteen years old, Marie, twelve; a boy, Paul, older than Marie and younger than Dina; and a Polish doctor, Lucien Walitzky, godson of Monsieur Babanine and constant attendant on the ailing, half-paralyzed old gentleman in all their travels. Marie and Paul were the children of Madame Bashkirtseff. Dina, a niece, daughter of a brother of the young woman, had been adopted by the nomadic household.

The physiognomy of Nice has altered considerably in half a century. The city has now been overrun by the Orient and the two Americas. Vast cos-

mopolitan hotels with their eternally new façades line the thin crescent of the *Baie des Anges*. The orange trees, the tamarinds, the aloes, the Indian fig trees retired into the interior. White stone replaces verdure, there are concrete terraces where gardens used to be. The Promenade is crowded with caravanseries which house the swarms of Babel. Anonymous multitudes, of all classes and all races, of ever-changing personnel, throng this marine avenue where they are assailed by photographers and peddlers of tinted glass. Here and there strolling singers, who are not even Italians now, attract crowds to which they sell the latest Parisian novelties. Except at the time of the flower festival there are no more slowly driven carriages displaying gowns whose style indicates their creators as unmistakably as does the style of a painting, and no longer are there well-known faces, which formerly were recognized and pointed out. Nice, in augmenting the number of its cosmopolitan population, has lost greatly in quality. Rapid transportation, the automobile making it possible to flit back and forth between simultaneous residences, has played a large part in this transformation of the physiognomy of a

luxury city. People can live, at the same time, in Nice, Cannes, Saint-Raphael, Monte Carlo, Mentone. The hotels have become cities within the city. Acquaintances are struck up and not continued. People meet in passing. They do not know each other.

When the Babanine-Bashkirtseff-Romanoff family came to install its wandering penates in the beautiful dwelling *Acqua-Viva*, the cosmopolitan element of Nice still had the aspect of an organized society, with similar traditions, reserve, and caste spirit. In many drawing rooms, the fashionable life of Paris, London, Madrid, Vienna, Saint-Petersburg, and the Italian cities was reproduced on a smaller scale. The new rich were learning their trade before submitting themselves to the critical inspection of society, back at home. Doors were half-opened; they were rarely forced.

For these reasons, for still others, the Babanine family, after six months' stay in one of the prettiest villas of the *Baie des Anges*, continued to live in a splendid isolation.

These Russians—who were they? They came from Geneva, from Vienna, from Baden, from places

of passage, where their names and faces had not been remembered. Servants who had been brought from Russia or Switzerland had vaguely informed the curious. This family claimed to be noble, as in fact it was. But the few compatriots on their visiting list added picturesque and disconcerting details of information. Monsieur Babanine, the grandfather —handsome white head, long, fine beard—had formerly held a diplomatic post in the Caucasus. His name (Baba Nina) revealed a Tartar origin. His conversation showed him to be a lettered man, perhaps a poet. He said he had known Lermontoff, Pushkin, and manifested a great fervor for the memory of Lord Byron.

He had had numerous children. His sons, Alexander, George (the father of Dina), Stephen, Vladimir, Nicholas, lived in the family estate at Tcherniakof in Little Russia, or occupied government posts. They had not much fortune, in consequence of the division of the patrimony—which was not very important in the first place—and were without influence in their country.

The younger of the two daughters who accompanied Monsieur Babanine at Nice, Madame Ro-

THE BASHKIRTSEFF VILLA AT NICE
The building has recently been torn down.

manoff, a tall, big-boned creature, was a widow quite wealthy in estates inherited under conditions which had caused some slander.

Madame Bashkirtseff, the other daughter, had lived for ten years separated from her husband. This man, the most important land owner of Gavronzi, in the district of Poltava, was the son of General Paul Gregorevitch Bashkirtseff, famous in the Crimean War, a very stern, even, it was said, a ferocious soldier. About this family, which evil tongues named "the family of a hundred crimes", stories were still current. It is noteworthy how little travelers or foreign residents are inclined to halo their compatriots whom they meet away from home. They reëcho the distant rumors, distort and amplify them, and of course no one is going to travel a thousand miles to learn the truth. The Russian tenants of *Acqua-Viva* were certainly victims of thoughtless chattering. They met with snubs which doubtless they would have taken quite philosophically if they had not known that the social hostility was a source of real suffering to the object of all the tenderness of this wandering household: little Marie, "Moussia", whose wide-awake twelve years revealed a disturb-

ing sensitiveness, aggravated by a precocious indomitable pride.

SLAV SOULS, WANDERING SOULS

HOWEVER it was the child's mother who had desired this journey without determined aim, this exile from a land where there had been no happiness. The conjugal life of Madame Bashkirtseff had lasted scarcely two years. The husband represented perfectly the type of the Little Russian country gentleman, as he appeared to us in "The Brothers Karamazov". His character, dwarfed and deformed from childhood by a brutal discipline, expressed itself at manhood in gruff selfishness, doubtful integrity, waves of vanity. He affected a democratic simplicity, but was subject to sudden fits of aristocratic arrogance. Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff was a big man, very blond, with light eyes; he was neither handsome nor ugly, but somewhat awkward and very rustic. Immediately on being liberated from the paternal tyranny he had abused the pleasures of the neighborhood city and had plunged, with no business experience whatever,

into speculations which had taken half his means. Coming to his senses, in a fashion, he had prudently resigned himself to the life of a country gentleman and returned to his estates of Gavronzi. His democratic habits, his taste for a joke, made his neighbors in the country consider him an accessible, hospitable good fellow, and this reputation, plus a reputation for the energy which was attributed to his ancestors, was to obtain for him, toward 1880, the appointment of marshal of the nobility of the Poltava district. At the age of twenty-five Constantine Bashkirtseff had married the eldest daughter of Monsieur Babanine, who possessed some estates in the vicinity. Pretty Marie Babanine, whose existence up to that time had been much coddled, adjusted herself badly to the peremptory caprices, the frivolous habits, and the nagging wit of the lord of Gavronzi. The intervention of the two families transformed the private dissension into irreconcilable open quarrels. One day Madame Bashkirtseff left Gavronzi with her two children and returned to the paternal home of Tcherniakof, not, however, with the idea of definitely settling there, for the young woman had that nomadic instinct, one of the peculiarities of the Slav

soul, which by continuous movement gives itself the illusion of pursuing dreams forever unattainable.

First, there were trips to Saint Petersburg and to the Crimea, where the court passed the summer season and where the beauty of Madame Bashkirtseff was much noticed by the Emperor.

After the death of Madame Babanine the family left the house of mourning and attempted to live at Kharkof. But Kharkof, the Little Russian center of artistic activity and provincial elegance, is a tiny dot on the map and Madame Bashkirtseff stifled within its narrow horizons. Marshaling her children, her devoted and submissive sister Romanoff, and old Babanine, who left an excellent library with great regret, Moussia's mother, in 1870, began a sort of tour of Europe, from Vienna to Baden and from Geneva to Nice.

In the Museum of Nice there is a portrait of Madame Bashkirtseff which undoubtedly was painted at the time of her betrothal or in the early days of her marriage. The hair, of the color of ripe chestnut, is done up in brown bands, with long silk ringlets. The amber eyes are a wide oval. The brows are fine, the nose narrow, not very long, the mouth

somewhat large but not ungracefully so; this with a pastel coloring composes a very agreeable countenance. The portrait indicates the epoch. The young woman is dressed in a black dress with a tippet and ribboned flounces, the collar bordered with white and red flowers. Under the tippet one sees the flowing batiste sleeves, their cuffs fastened with gold buttons. Madame Bashkirtseff is sitting in a red chair, her left elbow on the red cover of a center table. One hand supports her chin, the other hand rests on her knee. The hands are pretty, slender, and luminous. The expression of the face which is outlined sharply against the somber ground is one of extreme melancholy.

Madame Bashkirtseff, according to the Diary of her daughter and the recollections of those who knew her when she was young, had a sonorous voice which could be gentle and caressing; she was prompt at repartee and vivid of speech. She had had very little instruction, though, and her mind was badly balanced; she had a certain manner but no refinement, and the bad habit, for lack of ideas and culture, of talking with random volubility about her servants, her health, her dogs.

Her dress was flamboyant like her speech. In his book, *La Journée Brève*, Monsieur Abel Hermant, who seems to have attempted a romantic incarnation of Marie Bashkirtseff in his heroine Zozia Wieliczka, gives a portrait of Zozia's mother in which one can recognize, at least partially, the figure and the toilet of Madame Bashkirtseff. The countess Wieliczka, the novelist tells us, astounded the eye. She was miserably dyked out in silly extravagance. She had the very best modiste and couturier, but because she would make over her hats and dresses herself, add accessories and impoverish with the intention of enriching, she "made herself look stranger than one would have thought humanly possible."

Certainly, it is in this aspect, still unadapted to her new life, that Madame Constantine Bashkirtseff appeared between 1872 and 1875 during her stay in Nice or her trips to Rome, Florence, and Naples. Endowed, however, with a quick enough intelligence, obliging, generously impulsive, Moussia's mother was not without a certain charm, in spite of the abundance of words, the gaudy dress, and the lack of moderation in everything.

Madame Romanoff, the younger sister of Madame

Bashkirtseff, seemed physically her elder. Ugly, soft-hearted, loud-voiced but timid, Madame Romanoff was passionately fond of cigars and roulette. She had not had a pampered childhood. Everybody had always been in the habit of demanding everything of her, and she continued to lavish her passionate devotion on her dear ones, particularly that little living divinity Moussia, the most loved and the least respectful of nieces.

Madame Romanoff was rich. Fortunately for everybody. The resources of this family, which gave the impression of being in very good circumstances, were, as a matter of fact, quite uncertain. The patrimony of the Babanines was divided between the grandfather who had been carried off to Nice and the children who remained in Russia. Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff gave no allowance to his wife, not even to his children. One divined long and inextricable family difficulties. There was a lawsuit which dragged out endlessly and which influenced painfully the material and moral existence of the Babanines. One of the brothers of Madame Bashkirtseff, George, formerly the favorite, a prodigal, an unfortunate gambler, a drunkard, found himself

in a difficult situation, which was to become completely lamentable, humiliating. He must be helped. They had begun by taking his daughter Dina, who was three years older than Marie, and who at once became the submissive companion of her cousin and adoptive sister.

At the time when the family is taking the house in Nice, Dina is a robust adolescent with large features and little blue Kalmuk eyes. Her only beauty is a magnificent head of Russian blond hair. Very much the good girl, devoted, pious, of average intelligence, she adores Moussia, who, for the most part, is nice to her but does not regard her as completely an equal.

There is also brother Paul, a little older than Marie, a big boy with a chin already soft, an inexpressive eye; brusque, sometimes brutal, but not asserting himself as a character, and manifesting little taste for effort and study.

All these people live quite tumultuously in the great villa on the *Promenade des Anglais*, whose hospitable door is entered by none. The money arrives irregularly. In Paris, where in the August of 1875 Marie and her mother are stopping at the

Grand Hotel, after passing a season at Schlangenbad, funds are lacking. "Everything is admirable," the little girl notes, "except the character of my august mother who is angry from morning to night and economizes so much that it is terrible. Hasn't she even proposed that we quit eating breakfast?" This does not keep her from going to the Opera in the evening and to the Bois every afternoon in a two-horse victoria. Gowns are ordered from Laferrière, while Marie writes, in prose and in doggerel verse, to Aunt Romanoff, who stayed in Nice, to solicit "some of the vile metal."

Poor good Aunt Romanoff, whom the family of her husband, disappointed in its hope of inheriting, accuses of the blackest crimes! Was she not seen, one day, taking her jewels to the Mont-de-Piété (in Marseilles) because the money from Russia had not come and she did not wish to delay a trip to Florence that had been promised to Marie? The manna, at other times, arrives in blessed abundance. Madame Romanoff has had a forest on her estate cut down or perhaps has sold a village. Then they are rich enough to permit themselves to go to Monte Carlo every week and lose small fortunes, despite the

remonstrances of Marie, who has an invincible repugnance for gambling.

The household, in this thoughtless disorder, gets along as it can. The haphazard dwelling, almost like furnished lodgings, where two or three branches of the same family have now come to live, often has the aspect of a camp of nomads.

Those who are acquainted with the mode of living of the more fortunate Russian emigrants in Paris at present can form an exact idea of the life of the Babanine-Bashkirtseff-Romanoffs in the first part of their stay in Nice. Despite great daily expenditures there is nothing in the house to suggest permanence. After they have lived there three years they have hardly the necessary articles, and if the drawing-room is loaded, most of the rooms remain empty. No one would suffer from this if that same strange little Moussia did not utter the distressing lament: "The disorder of the house is a great sorrow to me; the details of the service, the rooms without furniture, this air of devastation, of poverty, break my heart! My God, take pity on me, and help me to put things in order. I am alone!"

THE "WHITE CREATURE"

AN astonishing creature, this little Moussia, who from her birth had been the object of the anxiety, the pride, the idolatry of those about her.

"You have two children," a Jew had said to the mother. "The son will be like everybody else, but the daughter will be a *star*."

Someone who had seen the little girl dressed up for a festival had observed, "From the way you wear your gloves, mademoiselle, it is easy to see that you will be a terrible coquette."

Another day, Madame Bashkirtseff, returning from the Crimea, had said, referring to some childish prank, "Marie is a fool!"

"Martha," said the child to her nurse, who remained with her many years, "let us go away. Mama has mistaken someone else for Marie."

At the age when babies are still stammering words which are to be translated into sentences Marie was dreaming of mad grandeurs. At five years she clad herself in her mother's laces, adorned her head with

flowers, and went gravely into the drawing-room to execute a dance. She was the famous danseuse Petipa and all her family admired her without reserve. Or else she imagined that she was the most famous singer in the world. Or else she electrified the masses by her speeches and the Emperor of Russia was obliged to marry her to retain his throne.

According to the custom of noble Russian families living in the country, Marie had had Russian governesses and French teachers. One of these, Madame Brenne, a woman with pale sad blue eyes, who wore a Restoration headdress, Marie loved very much. This Frenchwoman taught her drawing and overwhelmed her with caresses. But Madame Brenne was consumptive and had gone to the Crimea, where she died about 1868. Remember this perilous and almost constant proximity of a child and an invalid who was suffering from a very contagious malady.

Until the age of ten the little girl was frail, homely, rude. Yet no one about her doubted that she would become an admirable creature and be called to every social success. Indeed Moussia developed very rapidly in the hotbed of Nice, so rapidly that

A BASHKIRTSEFF FAMILY PORTRAIT

Left to right—Marie Bashkirtseff (five years old), Madame Bashkirtseff, nursery maid and Paul, Marie's brother.

at twelve one would readily have believed her to be two or three years older, physically and morally. Taking part in the reckless conversations of this family, which were as free as they were immoderate, Marie expressed herself like a grown person on all the subjects which can come up in the frivolous life of a cosmopolitan city.

This childish personality, however, already stands out, in force and in authority, from its feeble, wavering background. Marie, Moussia, Mouche, Mouka —for she was given all these names—opposed an occidental will to the semi-Asiatic fatalism of her family. A taste for method, for order, a sense of harmony asserted itself in her amid the confusion and agitation of the family group, and she felt a superiority based on an active and prodigiously receptive intelligence. "I have only myself," she will say, "and I shall succeed."

The anxiety to realize one's personality is quite exceptional in an adolescent. It does not develop without inconveniences, without dangers, even. Almost always it manifests itself first in error and extravagance. Certainly the young Russian between 1873 and 1876, appeared to the people of Nice, of

Spa, of Rome, of Naples and Florence, as an eccentric and sufficiently disturbing little girl, and it is in this aspect that we must observe her first. Let us understand of course that everything is relative in time and in the usages which vary with time. We must consider Marie in the light of the past, of the period when she was living the tender days of her fifteenth and sixteenth year. Girlhood has changed a good deal since the epoch when the mothers and grandmothers of today were young girls themselves. How tame and old-fashioned the former originalities of Moussia would appear today to the shingled little amazons who parade their equivocal silhouettes along the Riviera.

Moussia, her mother, her aunt, her cousin, without friends (when they arrive they know only the Russian Consul and through him a family named Howard, besides two or three Russian families), quickly attract attention in all the places where the winterers meet without being obliged to make friendships: on the promenade, in the casino, at the skating rink; at round dances, pigeon shoots, regattas, races, charity festivals. This family, in the distrustful opinion of the people of Nice and even of the tran-

sients, is a family which has ugly lawsuits in its own country and which one cannot receive into one's home. Madame Romanoff, the particular target of the current gossip, declares philosophically that she laughs at the stories and their tellers. Grandfather Babanine, helpless, almost blind, hardly counts for the society of Nice. Nobody outside the house pays any attention to the old man who is scarcely glimpsed during the short walks which he takes leaning on the arm of his servant Triphon. But Marie and Dina, with Madame Bashkirtseff, show themselves everywhere, and their far from simple style of dress, especially Moussia's, does not pass unnoticed. Where does the money come from? Who provides this ill-balanced luxury which, one divines, is intermittent? There are little debts with tradesmen, and on certain days trifling sums, ridiculous but necessary, are borrowed from the drawing teacher, Bensa.

Nevertheless, little Bashkirtseff, followed by her four dogs, runs about the Promenade des Anglais in a Laferrière gown, bareheaded, her sunny hair on her shoulders. At fourteen she is no longer a little girl in the awkward stage. Moussia, definitely

formed, has become a delicious creature, tall, well-modeled, with arms and hands which a Largillière would have signed, dainty feet of which she will always be vain, gray-blue eyes, very direct, very frank, in which there are laughter and thought. Especially she has that fragile and intoxicating freshness of April roses which makes her say, "It's very convenient, all I have to do to be pretty is to plunge my face in cold water." For Marie is conscious of this new charm of her being. In her fourteenth year she has ascertained with delight the beauties which are developing in her, lines, features, modeling, color. She confides often to her Diary: "I am pretty, at least pleasing." She knows already the power of her precious charm, and she tests it. She is very coquettish. Everywhere she goes she has a court of young men, men of all ages, in fact. Who does not know her, at least by sight, in Nice? Her remarks, at once bold and naif, are repeated. Under the domino and the mask, at masquerade gatherings, she intrigues impertinently, and her pranks do not pass unnoticed. In the clubs, in the hotel lobbies, although she has never tolerated any familiarities, the young men among themselves

designate her by her family nickname, "Did you see what Moussia was wearing at the regatta yesterday?" As she is always dressed in white the people of Nice, without particular good will, name her "the white creature."

In 1875 the family has moved from its temporary residence of *Acqua-Viva* to a neighboring house, which then was number 55-bis Promenade des Anglais, giving on the rue de France, a villa which Madame Romanoff has bought for her niece. There is an agreeable tropic garden, with palms, eucalypti, Indian fig trees, magnolias, roses in profusion and a grotto with an artificial spring whose water plashes into a basin. The buildings consist of a great central dwelling structure, a separate pavilion, quarters for the servants. On the terrace dominating the Promenade des Anglais Marie is often seen with Dina or perhaps with two other Little Russians, Marie and Olga Sapogenikoff. Marie and the Sapogenikoffs are designated, "The Three Graces" by a chance passer-by, and the remark is not lost on the young girls. Fine moonlight nights, Marie sits quite late on the balcony; she dreams there, playing the harp. Often, in the daytime, she crowns herself with

flowers like a Beatrice awaiting the visit of Dante. "Have I, then, no other aim in life than to dress myself with so much art, ornament myself with leaves and think of the effect?" For whom is the effect? For others? Yes, often, but primarily for herself. There is already in this child a narcissism of which some perhaps will disapprove, but I confess I have not the courage to reproach her for it, because it is part of her aesthetics as well as of her character.

If the gaze of coquettish women could wear out glass, Marie would be guilty of a prodigious consumption of mirrors. Marie does not wear out the mirrors, but she often breaks them with her eager and enthusiastic gestures. Each time, she has a mad terror, because the Little Russian is very superstitious and she is convinced that these accidents bring misfortune, as do three candles grouped in one room, the new moon seen over the left shoulder and a dream in which the stars fall from the sky. All the household believe in the miraculous, and their credulity is of the commonest order. Madame Romanoff frequently recalls how she learned in a crystal of her imminent widowhood, and one of the great dis-

tractions of these ladies is to visit clairvoyants, or to tell fortunes with cards, even cheating to give Moussia the illusion of extraordinary successes.

The young girl's private quarters in the villa testify to the adoration of those about her. The decorative scheme furnishes the people of Nice an additional motive for malicious remarks. They tell each other that Moussia sleeps in a bed which has the shape of a sea shell. This is true. But if we enter this private refuge of the little divinity, we see that everything is dainty, lovely, of an appropriate and charming elegance. Her rooms are on the second floor of the villa. One enters through a little antechamber in red satin whose doors and windows are painted in Pompeian style. The chamber, of an azure blue, resembles, to use Marie's expression, the interior of a glove box padded with satin, hung with white lace and tulle. The shell bed is supported by carved lion paws. From the silken ceiling hangs a Sèvres luster. From this light and velvety nest one passes into a vast boudoir, study and sleeping room, in light flowered cretonne, with woodwork lacquered white and rose, with closets and mirrors in profusion. The furniture consists of great armchairs and of some

light chairs. A commode is disguised under a glass case in which are rows of books. In an extension from this room, there is a bathroom, then a linen closet provided with great presses for gowns, from which one returns into the red antechamber. All light and radiant, with windows and a balcony overlooking the sea and the mountain. It is in this sunny retreat that Moussia chatters with her young Russian friends, exchanges confidences with Dina, receives Aunt Romanoff with impertinences which make her "take on like Hecuba during the sack of Troy". In this refuge again, the adolescent dreams before her mirror on getting out of the bath, saturates herself with fresh violet and ascertains that at the least emotion her upper arm becomes burning hot. She takes a lively interest in the tales of Nice which her maid brings her; she reads serious books and plays with her dogs, Prater, Pincio, Coco, Niniche, faithful companions, whose kind, tender eyes make her forget the malicious remarks of this "provincial nest of scandal" and the irritating prattle of her family. "In our house the dogs have great intelligence, much more than their masters."

Marie is not yet seventeen when, on returning

STUDIO OF MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF AT NICE

from a trip to Naples, she receives a delicious little carriage, a white "basket" created by Binder. From now on she is seen in the streets of Nice or on the Promenade, driving a team of white ponies with yellow harness, with cream cover clasped by a monogrammed silver plaque. Dina accompanies Marie to the races, the family following in the victoria, and the toy equipage makes a sensation. "White horses, white carriage, white ladies, blond hair, lamps gleaming in the last rays of the sun . . . a bit of fairyland." It is pretty. It is much looked at. It is even admired, but the remarks are not sympathetic. "Not a friendly soul in this motley crowd, which contains all the depravity to be found in Nice, Monaco and Paris." At the skating rink, in the evening, Marie, duly chaperoned, appears in a Laferrière gown with white quilting, with a wide band of down simulating a fur of snow and with a similar band at each wrist "like a dainty muff". Charming, but perhaps too rich. Moussia has a vague feeling that it exceeds the limits which prudence would place upon a young girl's elegance. She asks, "Why dress this way?" and tells herself, "If I dressed more poorly, they would merely think of something else

to say about me." *They* are "the fashionable people here", "hostile society" which repulses her so sternly, her, her winsomeness, enthusiasm, her pretty gowns, her family.

Do they plan an evening party at her home, at which the famous Diaz de Soria is to sing? Only strangers are in the audience. All advances are met with humiliating rebuffs. Then Marie isolates herself in her little library or in her beautiful garden. She shuts herself in her room and throws herself on the carpet of white fur in a crisis of tears which ends each time in a fit of coughing. She seeks solitude where she no longer has to act under constraint; she notes, in her Diary, her small disappointments and her great wraths. But at other times she reacts with all the mettle of her ardent youth; she drags her aunt to the market place, banters the market women with expressions in the dialect of Nice, exuberant, unbridled, childish, receiving with rapture the admiring exclamations of the good women who find her pretty, amusing, lovable, a white angel, a gilded treasure. And the girl, appeased, happy, hums, to the great joy of the old wives, the song in vogue in Nice, *Le Rossigno che.*

VOLA

THIS refined and dainty creature has a liking for popular homage. She would like, if she became a famous woman—and she professes a strange cult for Théroigne de Méricourt and Louise Michel—the adulation of the multitudes. We have said that in her childhood she had those extraordinary dreams in which she saw herself Empress of Russia, and, naturally, the most adored of empresses. It must be added that those around Moussia spoke a good deal of the Emperor. How, indeed, could Madame Bashkirtseff have kept from evoking a hundred times her great success as a beauty during her season in the Crimea, when her graces had held the attention of the sovereign? The compliments of Alexander II had so turned her head as to make her jealous of a great lady to whom the czar addressed more precise homage. Madame Bashkirtseff even had the extraordinary audacity to place herself in the way of the sovereign one day when he was leaving the dwelling of the princess whom he favored with his visits. "That is not done, Madame," Alexander

had said to her with humorous severity. To ease her frightful embarrassment, the Emperor sent her a jewel, a ring, which Madame Bashkirtseff liked to show when telling the story. This family memoir perhaps explains a similar adventure of which Marie is to be the heroine. In the second there is less romance, and no gift.

Marie's taste for the homage of the humble manifested itself in the most diverse forms. At Nice it made her revive in her quarter a local custom almost abandoned since the annexation to France. This was the custom of "turning the May", dancing and singing rounds under a lantern and an arch of verdure. One of the first days in May 1876 Marie had ordered "a great thingumajig of foliage and flowers", ornamented with Venetian lanterns, to be hung in the middle of the rue de France. On the garden wall of the villa Monsieur Babanine's domestic, Triphon, sets off fireworks, lights Bengal lights. There is an orchestra composed of a harp, a flute, and a violin. Wine is distributed in abundance. Marie, Dina, and the little Sapogenikoffs banter the dancing women, sing in the patois of Nice, see that things are kept lively. The good folk of the quarter acclaim

"Mademoiselle Marie" and Mademoiselle Marie is radiant. "While I was on the ladder with Olga, who was pulling me by the skirts, I really had a great desire to make a speech. But I prudently abstained for this year. . . ."

Everybody in Nice, next day, was speaking of this new eccentricity of Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff who, it was said, had danced all night with Italians, servants and shop boys.

"And to think that there are mothers who tolerate such things!"

"Oh! these Russians, you know. . . ."

And hostile society became more hostile than ever.

I am not, I confess, of this "hostile society". I, for one, love this little Moussia, imprudent, eccentric, coquettish, generous, living like mad. Russian? This is just youth singing, laughing, dancing, dreaming, and weeping crocodile tears with the frantic grimaces of an enraged baby. I can hear the silvery tumult of the white team driven by the white adolescent in her white carriage. I am grateful to her for painting her fresh image a hundred, a thousand times. I love to hear her sing a popular song of Nice

for the pleasure of four huckster women who want to embrace her. I am not displeased when she creates plebeian joy under the terrace of her beautiful flower-clad villa. And, tenderly, tenderly, I sympathize with this little soul in consternation when, warned by slanders for which she has at least furnished the pretext, Moussia, after outbursts of indignation, bundles herself in a cowled monk's frock —oh! made of no rough serge—and goes out to seek consolation from the philosophers who mature her mind and reassure her sensibility.

Until now we have seen Marie Bashkirtseff as everyone could see her at Nice, without knowing her. Let us try to make her acquaintance more seriously in the reality of her inner life which nobody, outside her family, suspects in the city of gossip, flowers, and pleasure.

THE HAIR SHIRT

FIRST of the facts which are not known about her in Nice is that this mettlesome little creature, madly in love with life, is an invalid, almost constantly in danger. Toward her fifteenth

year she begins to lose, at least intermittently, her voice, that beautiful voice which in her childhood dreams was to give her glory and fortune. She suffers from a bad chronic laryngitis, prolonged bronchitis, exhausting colds. Her chest and lungs are so frail that she must be taken almost every year to the warmer climate of Italy. The impatient girl who "wishes not to lose a single month of her life", does not adjust herself to regimens and puts her doctors in despair by her imprudences, yet reproaches them furiously when she feels most ill. "I spit blood, you know," she announces one day to the "angelic" Doctor Walitzky. "You must take care of me." "With the life you lead, mademoiselle," the Pole answers, "you will certainly have every malady." And if you think the life she is leading is simply that of a wild little girl, a precocious and incorrigible worldling of the winter-resort cities, you are greatly mistaken. The good doctor alludes principally to another fever of activity, intellectual activity, which is constant and unsparing.

Remember, Marie Bashkirtseff is a very intelligent and ambitious little girl. She intends to become a dominant personality in the society of her

time. Since marriage must assure her the fortune indispensable to a great situation, she does not neglect the element of beauty which she considers necessary to achieve the union she has dreamed of. Fortune means the independence necessary to achieve this radiant destiny. But she is too clear-sighted to overlook the factor of intellectual worth. The enrichment of her mind—since she is not to be the famous singer, the admired dancer, the empress of her childish fancies—alone will give her the right to a dominant place in the best society. Then she must educate herself, and she makes of study a passionate and unsparing enterprise.

In Russia, in Vienna, in Baden, in Geneva, she had had teachers who had taught her nothing. It was then thought sufficient for a young girl of a good Russian family to know two or three foreign languages for the sake of travel, and a bit of music, the music partaking of the romantic sensitiveness of the Slav soul. Any other attainment was a superfluity which had never concerned Madame Bashkirtseff, and Aunt Romanoff even less. At Nice, by Marie's will, everything changes. At twelve she maps out her studies with the aid of the lycée professors

who are astonished at her passion for culture: nine hours of tasks and lessons every day. She perfects herself in the study of English, of Italian, of music, scolds her drawing teacher, Monsieur Bensa, furiously for not giving her a sufficiently methodical instruction, dramatically abandons her governess, who is too often late at recitation-time. "It is my whole life she is stealing from me in robbing me of my lesson." She asks God to help her learn more quickly. Every time she comes out of her books she is driven back to them "as if with a whip". She has begun Latin in February 1874. Five months later, in July, her professors find that she has made the progress in this time that the lycée students make in three years. "I work like mad so as to read Horace." She has in her room a real laboratory, with retorts, test tubes, crystals, acids. She soon conceives a passion for Greek, and this love of antiquity, this feverish assimilation of the classics, is to take away a great deal of her Slavism. She pores over her books of history and literature until late in the night. "I bury myself in serious reading, and I see with despair that I know so little. I envy the yellow, fleshless, ugly savants." Yet she is as advanced as it is possible to

be at her age. But she would like to master all the sciences. Especially she wants to know minutely the biographies of illustrious men. Of course, she reads Plutarch. It is the book she keeps under her pillow. At night, in her azure satin cell, when she has doffed her light gown and put on the monk's frock, she reads Plutarch and prays God.

Moussia lives morally in the intimacy of the elect whom the Greek historian has exalted. She is not unique in this taste for a spiritual commerce with superior persons, the search for the great man being often the dream of the child and the woman. But more than any other, doubtless, the adolescent girl marvels at these destinies, receives the influence of these minds, realizes an acquisition of energy and truth from the examples of the great, from that contemplation of "these almost divine figures" in which our thoughts and our manners educate and perfect themselves. She fortifies herself with genius to react against the mediocrity of her environment.

Of course I would not give the impression that her studious efforts were confined to the adolescent period of her life. Let us note, however, that by the age of sixteen she will have completed a good part

of her intellectual acquisition. At that age when she makes her first trip to Russia, Maria will take Plato along, and Ariosto, Dante, Shakespeare. Near the end of her life, when François Coppée visits Marie Bashkirtseff in her home in the rue Ampère, he will notice the "Phaedo" open in the young woman's studio.

Emerson has profited by the riches which the reading of Plato can offer to a person of avid thought. As Emerson says, this Greek who absorbs his century, this formalist who has covered everything, is entitled to eulogy as fanatical as Omar's sweeping tribute to the Koran: "Burn the libraries, for all their science is in this book". Boethius, Rabelais, Erasmus, Locke, Rousseau, Coleridge have successfully carried over into their mother tongues what they have derived from Plato. Similarly, Saint Augustine, Copernicus, Newton, Swedenborg, Sir Thomas More, Lord Bacon, Goethe are on some point his debtors. Emerson could have found at least the reflection of as extensive a speculation in a number of the thoughts which the adolescent, then the young woman, inscribed in her Diary. But all the masterpieces of the human mind solicited the

curiosity of this impatient girl, and Marie Bashkirtseff could with ease read, besides the French and Russians, in their original text, the Italians, the English, the Germans, as she read the Romans and Greeks. Had she not even dreamed of making a list of all the great works of all countries and of all times, all the human intellectuality which she would have liked to absorb? Rather chaotic assimilation, for Moussia reads almost simultaneously Saint Augustine and the abbé Prévost, Alexandre Dumas *père* and the New Testament, Tibullus, Confucius, Jouffroy and Fourier.

But above all others this little Slav worships the Greeks and Romans. No modern drama, no sensational novel, no comedy manufactured for success will make so profound an impression on her, will give such a vivid and lasting illusion as the description in the Iliad of the capture of Troy.

When in 1875 she goes to Florence to witness—and with what enthusiasm!—the festivals commemorating the fourth centenary of Michael Angelo, Marie does not fail to visit the Uffizi Gallery for the sculptural representations of the great men of antiquity. The Alcibiades, with the little mouth

showing the teeth, disappoints her, and she finds Socrates very ugly. "He was right to go in for philosophy and to talk brilliantly. He could not have done anything else." Cicero, on the other hand, does not displease her. She lingers before the faces of the illustrious Romans and before the busts of the emperors, of Nero especially, who seems to her beautiful as no man ever was.

Let us remember that the thinkers and historians of antiquity have influenced Marie strongly from earliest childhood. This will explain at the same time her errors of sensibility and her lofty morality. Perhaps it was from them too that she got the idea of a personal book in which she would grow great, of a living romance made of her flesh and her soul, of the Diary begun at twelve and of which, at not quite fourteen, Marie said proudly, "This diary is the most useful and instructive of all the writings which have been, are, or will be. It is a woman who reveals herself with all her thoughts and hopes, disappointments, ugliness, beauties, sorrows, joys. I am not yet a complete woman, but I shall be. One can follow me from childhood to death. For the life of a person, an entire life, without any

disguise or deception, is always a thing of greatness."

IN SEARCH OF A GREAT MAN

IS not communion with illustrious men a bit dangerous at times for the impressionable nature of a child? Marie confesses to us that her beloved Plutarch has overexcited her "gigantic imagination". He has made her detest mediocrity, and we learn, from what she confides to her Diary, that this exaltation of her spirit has permitted her sometimes to be attracted to false great men and parade-heroes, although no moral downfall has resulted from this, her soul stifling her passions within her secret platonic armor.

What sort of great man, one wonders, can be met among the transients and pleasure seekers of a resort city? Marie as a child and even as an adolescent, until her sixteenth year at least, will offer us the contrast of a childish emotional nature and an intellectuality prematurely enriched, and this disequilibrium will produce suffering which sometimes is acute. So there can be no surprise at the precocity

and extravagance of Marie's first love, entirely imaginary, at which we shall have to smile although it caused some shedding of tears.

In the winter of 1873, Moussia, then a little less than thirteen years old, had occasion to meet, on the Promenade des Anglais and in the festivals of Nice, a great British lord, the Duke of Hamilton, dominating the cosmopolitan luxury by the splendor of his yacht, of his equipages, of his beautiful Italian mistress. Tall, well-built, with a red-gold mustache and an insolent manner, the Englishman aroused a sort of infatuation in this little girl who discovered in him something of Nero and of the Belvedere Apollo. The Duke of Hamilton certainly never had any idea of the love which he had inspired in Marie Bashkirtseff, probably never knew of her existence. Moussia's passion, as is proper at her age, was very ardent but exacted nothing of its object. "All my happiness," she has written, "consisted in seeing him; I remained on the terrace, I saw him sometimes and I returned into the house quite mad. I threw myself into Colignon's [the governess'] arms, I hid my face on her breast. She waited for a while, then gently she raised me and took me to my lesson—

still giddy, drunk with happiness." Then, one day, the child reads in the newspaper that the beloved is betrothed. For a week she thought she was going to die. Then she eliminated from her prayer everything relating to him. "To restrain myself from this prayer was the hardest of all. It seemed that my prayer had lost its soul, it had become so calm, so cold, so reasonable, that is to say, so empty." Later, in 1877, Moussia saw this same Duke of Hamilton, in a fiacre, on the Champs-Élysées. The Beau Brummel with the coppery hair and the fine mustache had become fat, very red-faced and had little russet mutton chops. Marie gave not another thought to the man who had not been able to preserve the face of Nero and the figure of the Belvedere Apollo.

Thus was dissipated the first of the mirages which will compose the sentimental life of Marie Bashkirtseff.

CHAPTER II

Among the Masks of Italy

THE "CARDINALINO"

FOR an hour or for a night the woman who masks her face frees her hidden being. Under the velvet mask, in the masked crowd through which she passes like a mystery, she has an audacity which is delightful to her for its taste of sin. Only those who hear confession will be able to explain how, in the play of intrigues, the prudish woman becomes libertine, the timid cynical, the proud familiar, the indifferent passionate, how this woman honored for her works of charity reveals a self venomous as an anonymous letter, and why that angelic creature talks like a strumpet. There are only rare occasions when women can act with the independence of men. When they wish to be entirely their true selves they must put on false faces.

The mask is Italian. It gave its sly inspiration to the Venetian fops of the eighteenth century, and

Roman society under the rule of the popes would have died of boredom if it had not been permitted to mask itself once a year so as to laugh in security. Hence the world-wide burlesque glory of the carnivals of Rome, Venice, Naples.

In Rome, fifty years ago, all the nobility still attended the masquerade balls held in the theaters. Albert Besnard, then a young student of the Villa Medici, was one of the last to know in their former glory these festivals which persisted as a yearly custom for some time after the Galantuomo replaced the Holy Father in temporal rule.

The papal aristocracy mingled at these masquerades with the people of the court. The beauty of the women retained that noble and somber character which, according to Stendhal, made one think "of passionate ecstasy rather than of the fleeting pleasure of a flirtation". However, to conceal their identity, these patrician women in dominoes did not hesitate to alter their figures and did not neglect to change their jewels. But they renounced less easily their manner which always betrayed them at the very instant when they were quite willing to be known.

February 18, 1876, in the motley crowd of the ball which was being given at the Capitol, the smile of a very young girl challenged the ardor of the Italian gaze. This amused expression was certainly that of a foreigner, and at once she interested all the "black coats", who cared less for broaching a romance with a woman of Rome than for essaying an adventure with a giddy bird of passage.

The *veglione* is favorable to sudden amours. By tradition the familiar form of address is used, and the impertinences which are the pretext for approach lead quickly to gallant speech. The unknown girl had no domino. Her lively figure displayed its modeling in a tunic of black gauze. Over the blond hair was the most graceful cowl in the world. A mask of velvet fringed with lace disguised the forehead, the nose, perhaps the lips. A bouquet of roses and lilies of the valley adorned the corsage. This mysterious person had been seen first with a feminine companion as blond as she. Certain ones even affirmed that she had come down from a loge to which a solicitous family had followed her. A man was going up to her when she went up to him.

"My dear," she said, "I was looking for you."

"Really!"

This lad had a handsome face, with olive complexion, romantic eyes, small mouth, very white teeth like those of a small carnivore, mustache of a young man of twenty-three. Had he not recognized at once in the shadow-cowled figure a fresh creature in a white gown whom he had been following for three days in the streets, under the trees of the Pincio and even to the door of her hotel? The foreigner was amused as one is amused under the mask when one is exactly informed as to the social rank of the person with whom one is intriguing. This "black coat", she knew well, was Count Pietro Antonelli, nephew of the most considerable personage of "black" Rome, the Cardinal Secretary of State Antonelli, who would perhaps be pope tomorrow.

It is quite diverting for an inquisitive girl to be able, thanks to the mystery of masquerade, to explore the mentality of the gentleman who has committed the impropriety of sending her indiscreet messages through a chambermaid. Young girls always give a place to real love in flirtatious badi-

nage—as cannot be said for the majority of young men.

"I was looking for you."

And she treats him like a wild youth, shamelessly vain of his conquests.

He, in reply, forces the note of mockery, goes farther than she wishes. He exaggerates the events of his adolescent life, tells how, at seventeen, he ran away from the paternal home, too austere for him, to engage in agreeable and ruinous follies. He had even enlisted in the Italian army, thus committing what his family, for political reasons, considered a capital crime. In addition, he had been loved by so many women that he ought by now to be quite blasé.

"And you," he asks, "how many times have you loved?"

"I . . .?"

"How many times?"

"Once, perhaps twice. Does one know?"

"Oh! oh!"

"And I am not through."

"I should like to be the next."

"Presumptuous!"

He tells her that she resembles a young girl clad in white whom he has met in the streets of Rome and with whom, for the moment, he fancies he is smitten. He affirms a second time:

"You look like her."

"Come now! I am much prettier."

"I am not so sure——"

"Insolent!"

"Don't be angry, and give me a flower."

This request is not to be refused here. She gives him a rose. He offers in exchange a branch of ivy. And we shall admire, in passing, this masculine precaution of taking to a masquerade, in case of emergency, the symbol of constancy and fidelity.

But the little mask becomes nervous. The speeches of her partner, his lingering accent, his insistent gaze irritate her visibly and she does not try to disguise her feeling.

"You act like a priest. Is it true that you are going to be ordained?"

He laughs.

"I have been a soldier."

"In a seminary."

Will he be offended? She watches him keenly,

ready for an angry reply. But the sly young man takes the little hand and kisses it.

"Why have you begun so badly with me?" she asks.

He tries to seize her waist. She catches the arm of someone who is passing.

"Throw this madman out!"

And she thinks: "I have never seen men except a little on the promenade, at the theater, and at home. Heavens! How different they are at a masked ball. So reserved in their loges or in their carriages, so vulgar and stupid here! I have been amused and disillusioned. Ah, this miserable 'son of a priest' has taken away my glove and kissed my left hand."

Such was the frivolous beginning of the sentimental adventure between Marie Bashkirtseff and Pietro Antonelli.

The young girl had been in the city for two weeks with Madame Bashkirtseff, her cousin Dina, and Dina's mother. These ladies had stopped at the Hotel de Londres. Already, for the little Russian, Rome had been a marvelous and dazzling revelation. For long she will evoke her first visions of the Coliseum—where she stood trembling with emotion

in the lodge of the Vestals, facing that of Caesar; of the gardens of the Pincio which dominate the Tiber and the Campagna; of Saint Peter's, of whose marble the play of sun and shadow makes a temple of light; of the Saint John Lateran, where are preserved the heads of the apostles Peter and Paul, the chains of Saint John, the sudarium of Christ and the veil of the Virgin; of the palaces of the Corso, one of which was the dwelling-place of that creatress of the last of the demi-gods, Napoleon's mother, a Shakespearean phantom, a blind old woman, immobile in her museum of memories, among the portraits of her royal sons. All the origins of the modern world and spirit were lucidly expressed in these ruins seen by daylight and in the relics pored over by lamplight. Later one will find in the young girl's papers the plan of a history of Rome which she dreamed of writing.

Marie, from the very first, had wished to visit the popular quarters, to let her hired victoria mingle with the stream of carriages on the Corso, and to become acquainted with all the famous who could be approached here. Had she not thought, in her headstrong way, of forcing the well-guarded door of the

papal minister? More easily, she had got herself admitted with Madame Bashkirtseff to an audience of the Holy Father, who, leaning on an ivory cane, seemed older than his portraits, "his lower lip hanging down like that of an old dog". From this visit to the Vatican Moussia had brought back a blessed chaplet which was enclosed preciously in a perfumed box.

Albert Besnard has recalled how, at this period, he met Marie Bashkirtseff for the first time beside the fountain of Trevi. In a white serge dress, bordered with marten and braided with gold, in a white felt hat with white plumes, the young girl faced Neptune boldly.

One did not forget, after seeing it once, this "charming face of a young cat with gilded fur". Her expression was without cheerfulness, almost stern, that of one who is always on the defensive. And it is true that Moussia, rightly or wrongly perceived hostility and malice constantly around her, will persist all her life in this attitude of defense, of which, here more than elsewhere, she is to have need.

The intrigue begun at the Capitol is reaching its romantic height at the time of the street festivals

in which the population masquerades and flower-decked carriages parade under showers of confetti.

The Carnival of Rome in 1876 had already lost much of the picturesqueness which had diverted Goethe years before. No longer were there swash-bucklers seeking quarrels with everybody and shattering swords of cardboard over people's chests, nor advocates denouncing to the crowd the scandalous passions of the men, enumerating the lovers of the women. No longer were the weird creations with tremendous horns placed under the windows of young married couples, and no longer did people go to the trouble of designing the ingenious satiric headdress of former days, such, for example, as that cage in which two birds flitted, one costumed as an abbé and the other as a great lady.

However the Carnival of Rome was still a joyous tumult in that year 1876 when little Marie Bashkirtseff, aged fifteen, and young Albert Besnard, aged twenty, watched, from different corners of the Corso, the riot of masked men and women exchanging quips and volleys of paper projectiles. Formerly, without doubt, at this very place, women had thrown sweetmeats in the faces of the men whose attention

they wanted to attract. This gesture had lost its grace in becoming popularized, but had gained the picturesque appeal of popular expressions.

Between the Porta del Popolo and the Palace of Venice, where the battle was hottest, great chariots and vehicles of all kinds defiled, disguised like the crowd. The turbulent and gilded youth, in showy dominoes, occupied landaus which the pedestrians besieged. A coachman, impassive under his cardboard nose, held with a firm hand the reins of the team. And over this seething street, from the humblest windows, from the balconies of the hotels, from the loggias of the palaces, confetti fell in showers, while young men and young women exchanged bouquets and threw each other objects often of great value.

So, this Mardi Gras of 1876, Marie and Dina, in white, had taken their post of vantage on one of the balconies of the Corso and were joyously tossing from a basket their handfuls of multicolored ammunition. Marie was discharging volleys of rainbow paper on a handsome wench disguised as Polichinello who plagued the women, and on a young lad costumed as a *contadina* who was playing pranks on the men, when Pietro Antonelli passed under the

balcony and saluted. A gracefully tossed bouquet answered his gesture. Ten arms were raised to seize the bouquet on the wing, and someone for whom it was not intended succeeded in catching it. The boy *contadina* and the girl Polichinello had already begun their railleries when Count Pietro took the interloper by the throat and made him give up the booty.

"Bravo!"

The gesture was the perfection of romantic gallantry for the girl of fifteen. It took her breath away. Pietro looked so calm while "throttling the villain"! The young girl, "blushing like a rose of Nice", took a piece of string and let down a camelia to the noble Roman, who raised the flower to his lips and disappeared.

A great movement of the crowd, cries, hoots, whistles from the populace; the *barberi* are passing. The *barberi* are the little Barbary horses of the Roman Campagna. Plumed rustic grooms lead them, but do not mount them. A pistol shot gives the signal for starting and the *barberi* race without riders, jammed tightly one against the other, from the Piazza del Popolo to the Palace of Venice where the first arrival receives a streamer of ribbons from the

hands of the prefect of Rome. Marie, on her balcony, laughs, cries, applauds, like everybody else. Then there is an exchange of sharp remarks with a band of fops who have taken possession of the neighboring windows and who suddenly shout: at the end of a long stick decorated with gold paper, a beautiful bouquet is carried by a ragamuffin who approaches the balcony. A blow with a cane sends the bouquet flying to the side of the girl. Count Antonelli is paying Marie Bashkirtseff his respects for her camelia. And our Moussia, at this exploit, falls in love with Pietro, as, in the same atmosphere, and caught in the same net of ingenious attentions, any girl of fifteen would have done.

In this springtime of life everything is felt to excess and translated into images of heroic proportions. The young Italian is welcomed into the intimacy of the birds of passage. They play cards, they tell fortunes. The Roman is clever enough to win favor with Madame Bashkirtseff who calls him "her dear child". Dina slyly counsels her cousin to excite the jealousy of this boy by letting others court her. Marie becomes indignant. "Excite jealousy? Fie! In love, that is like using rouge on one's face. It is

vulgar. It is low." And she smiles on him whom she calls, playfully, the "Cardinalino".

The Cardinalino! His whole character is depicted in this sportive nickname. One sees him roving about, as a little boy, in the immense shadow of the Vatican, making puny efforts to escape, being recaptured at each attempt by a family of imperious faith who apply themselves to the minutiae of religious practise. When Pietro as a child was ill, did not his mother make him drink holy water and chew up bits of paper on which the word "Maria" was written countless times?

However, the Cardinalino deceives one at first with his emancipated gestures and his cynical speech. Albert Besnard recalls having been a second in a duel in which Count Antonelli fought with fury, "beautiful as an archangel". Pietro is also a graceful horseman. He invites the young Russian to go horseback riding. She accepts. Marie, as it happens, has in her wardrobe a delicious riding habit of black serge made all in one piece by Laferrière, "a princess dress tight-fitting all over".

"How chic you are on horseback!" says Pietro.

As they leave the city behind they naturally talk

about love. The young man professes abominable theories.

"Eternal love," he says, "is the tomb of love. One loves a day, then one changes."

"Charming! Is it your uncle, the Cardinal, who gives you ideas like that?"

Pietro has lost some points. He wins them back two days later by mastering Marie's horse which has shied dangerously under the wildly frightened eyes of Madame Bashkirtseff and Dina, for these ladies, in a landau, accompany the sentimental rides.

"You know," says Pietro, "before I met you I never loved anybody. My only affection was for my mother. All the rest——"

That is better. Marie silently extends her hand to her savior. Ah! how nice she is!

They return to the hotel.

"Is he——?" Dina asks.

"Completely, my dear."

And Moussia, as in all the great circumstances when she pleases to remain face to face with her imagination, shuts herself in her room, puts on her white monk's robe and draws the cowl over her eyes, to dream at her ease. Marry Pietro Antonelli?

Why not? His uncle, the Cardinal, is the most prominent figure in Roman society. For nearly half a century he has belonged to history. He is called "the red pope" while waiting to become the white pope perhaps, for Pius IX is very old, very ill.

"The beauties and the ruins of Rome are going to my head," this extraordinary girl confesses. "I wish to be a Caesar, Augustus, Marcus Aurelius, Nero, Caracalla, the Devil, the Pope." Not the Pope, evidently, but why not the niece of the Pope?

The following day there is an extraordinary commotion in the Bashkirtseff family. They leave the Hotel de Londres, and go to lodge in a vast and beautiful apartment on the first story of a great house in the via Babuino. Antechamber, little drawing room, large drawing room with grand piano and upright piano, four bedrooms, library, servants' rooms. Perhaps these Russians, who know only transients, aspire to receive Roman society, the real society, the "black" nobility, aloof in its ceremonious courtesy and distant even when want is covered by a great name, like "an old theatrical cloak" according to Moussia's expression. We do not know. But while awaiting the coming of the others, they re-

ceive Pietro Antonelli every day, Pietro alone, for his family does not follow. Marie, in this month of April 1876, is exquisitely springlike, with her brilliant eyes, her hair whose gold nuances she knows how to show to best advantage, and her youthful freshness. She was gorgeous, Albert Besnard recalls. The young Roman seems to have been much taken with the novel charm of this pretty, imperious little girl. Marie is more seriously moved. She plays Mendelssohn's songs without words. He sings, and when he does not sing he says very tender things, too tender. She guards herself with that laughter which for young girls is a defensive weapon. "He must see that while driving him away with words I am holding him with my eyes." One day as she is nibbling some violets, Pietro and one of his friends ask to share her repast. Marie gives them her flowers and they munch them, she says, "like two donkeys". I note these little things for their childishness. Marie is a child with ready laughter, and it is delightful that having her head filled with Plato and Epictetus she is all the same a little girl, playful and amorous, even if her mind, her heart, and her imagination are mistaken. And it is quite evident that here Moussia's

dream is leading her into a disappointing mistake, for decidedly the Cardinalino is not the right lover. Does he not ask Marie to elope with him, one evening? The well-behaved little girl wishes to see in this only a somewhat daring pleasantry. But soon it is another matter. Pietro, in great embarrassment, reminds Moussia that he is tormented with debts. His father is willing to pay them on condition that the wild boy lead henceforth a decorous life and, first of all, reconcile himself with God. In brief, Pietro has received the family order to retire to the monastery of San Giovanni e Paolo.

"Which is——?"

"Near the Coliseum."

The docile Cardinalino now shows through the magnificent truant. Moussia has great difficulty in remaining serious while her lover is speaking.

"That is *nice*, to be shut up in a convent! What will your friends at the Club say when they know about it?"

She sees the poor boy in a frock, a real frock of real sackcloth, in a cell, with four sermons a day, a mass, vespers, matins. She cannot seriously imagine

a situation so amusing. Pietro beseeches her to give him her portrait.

"Never, sir! Such a temptation—there!"

She laughs until the tears come. However she promises the penitent that next Sunday at two o'-clock she will be standing in front of the holy prison. He will show himself at his window, wiping his face with a white cloth.

Marie has kept up a good appearance. But after Pietro's departure she is cruelly torn by fury and melancholy. According to the Russian expression, "she has a cat in her heart". Madame Bashkirtseff is irritated. Dina makes exasperating remarks. Marie walks back and forth in her room moaning "like a wounded wolf". And is he to remain shut up forever, her Pietro? "No," she corrects the statement, "*they* have shut him up until I leave Rome." She sees clearly, in this happening, the hand of the imperious cardinal minister. This personage, evidently, would not have authorized the marriage of his nephew with the unknown and lively little foreigner who is seen a bit too much in the public festivals of Rome. The echo of the gossip has reached him. And then, a Greek Orthodox! He has placed his nephew in a cell. It

is quite simple. And little Moussia notes that it is maddening to be subject to an unknown and irresistible power, that there is nothing impossible for the cardinal who has only to signify his will to the people of the church, that the power of the priests is immense and that one cannot penetrate "their mysterious machinations". The order has been given, he has obeyed; but to obey he must have loved very little. Cowardly, weak, unworthy? Or domineered child?

What is there to do in Rome when one's lover is in a cloister, preached at by monks? Marie goes to Naples for the Easter festivals. She visits Pompei in a sedan chair, and her imagination busies itself reconstructing the ruins, repeopling the houses, giving back life and joy to the skeletons which frighten her with their "heart-wringing" poses.

When the ladies return to Rome at the end of April, they meet young Antonelli on the Corso, which is the daily parade ground of all good society.

Moussia finds her Pietro completely changed. He seems a man of thirty, "so decorous that he must have a Jesuit inside him". He announces that he is playing the hypocrite, that he kneels humbly and

submissively before his father. Sometimes he even lets a rosary fall from his pocket to show his family that he always carries one on his person. Marie, shocked, shaken, opens her eyes wide on observing this odd mixture of devoutness, libertinism, submission, depravity, prudery, haughtiness and baseness.

One will think that Marie then and there could have recovered from her infatuation and dismissed the man who let himself be treated like a little boy. But every day she fabricates illusions to replace those which her reason has dissipated the day before. The power of the papal world at Rome impresses her curiously, and she would like to be a power in this power. The hours of her stay in Italy are numbered now. She tries to obtain from Pietro the promise that he will speak to his father and that he will come immediately afterward and call upon her in Nice. She receives in reply only evasions, timid, hesitant, mingled with protestations of love which nevertheless decide Marie to return to Rome a few days later, pretending a wish to witness the festivals and races, and accompanied only, this time, by her Aunt Romanoff. Pietro, "a born night bird", spends

long evenings with these ladies. To Moussia, with his caressing voice, he says cruel things: Madame and Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff are unknown in Rome; Signor Antonelli, the boy's father, has written to Paris, to Nice, for information. "They may say what they will," the young man apologizes, with his almost feminine languor, "but I shall love you forever." The child listens, at the same time humiliated and touched. She is very pretty, more blonde and fresh than ever, with fire in her cheeks; headdress in the manner of the Capitoline Venus, white gown like a Beatrice, at her throat a chaplet and a cross of mother of-pearl. He gently leads her in front of a glass, for he knows he is very handsome, and they admire their graces as a couple. He repeats to her with more ardor that they shall marry.

That evening, May 19th, they pass many hours together, in the vast empty apartment of the hotel, under the absent-minded surveillance of Aunt Romanoff. They even make a tryst for midnight on the stairs. When the clock strikes the hour, Pietro takes leave and the young girl goes to her room, locking her aunt in, on the pretext that she does not wish to be disturbed while she is writing in her Diary. She

rejoins her lover on stealthy tiptoe, imagining that she is playing a rôle in a scene from a Dumas novel. Here they both are, in the darkness; she trembling and full of defenses, he suddenly intoxicated, with "tiger-cat manners", a bewitching voice, veiled, vibrant. . . . She takes off her cross and gives it to him still warm from herself.

"How I love you—how beautiful you are—how happy we shall be!"

Marie, who is beginning to lose her self-control, takes the young man's head in her hands, kisses his brow, his eyes, his hair.

But there is a tutelary spirit which is keeping watch, even when under lock and key.

"Marie, Marie, you must sleep."

"I am sleeping."

"You are undressed?"

"... Yes."

"Go to bed."

"Yes, yes. . . . "

And they begin again to speak of the future. Marie does not want to renounce her religion to marry this Catholic. Naturally, she does not want him to break with the cardinal, either. But she will

not consent to live with the Antonelli family, with the Capuchin father and the Jesuit brothers.

"We will buy a little house," says Pietro.

"I would rather have a big one."

"All right, a big one."

He tells Marie that the greater part of the cardinal's fortune will go to the nephew who first has a son.

"So," he concludes, "we must have a son right away."

"Oh what wicked black eyes!"

And the girl protects herself with her hand from a gaze which frightens her. But Pietro prostrates himself at the feet of Moussia, who tells him again and again that she must be doubly watchful. She makes him sit at her side; inwardly she is unhappy, ill at ease.

Then fear becomes uppermost and she orders the boy to go.

"You will love me always?" he implores.

He has used the familiar form of address. It chills her.

"Oh my darling, I wish we could never leave this spot."

"We should die of hunger," she replies, wounded by these familiar endearments and not knowing really what to say.

"Then, in a year?" he says with an ardor which perhaps is no longer feigned.

"In a year," she repeats, and her tone is that of a woman who loves: intoxicated, inspired, solemn.

And as at that moment the tutelary spirit is heard fumbling with the latch of her room door the two young persons kiss suddenly, not far from the lips, I fancy, and Marie flees without looking around.

But in her room, while undressing, she thinks: "Anyone who saw me go into the drawing room, near the stairs, at midnight, and come out after two hours spent absolutely alone with a perfectly shameless Italian, would not believe the Good God Himself if He came down from heaven to affirm how innocent it was!"

This scene perfumed with romance Marie will evoke for long with a vexed humiliation. This rapid kiss, this touching of lips in the night, will be the only weakening, the only carnal concession of the haughty, defensive, distant little creature. Already,

at the very moment, it seems to her such an enormity that she cannot keep from opening the door of her aunt's room and confessing that she has not been in bed, that she has been talking with Pietro.

"I knew it," replies Madame Romanoff. "I dreamed that your mother came to me and told me, 'Do not leave Marie alone with Antonelli.' "

The child, shuddering, thinks only then that she has risked a real danger. She looks at herself in the mirror and imagines that her lips have changed color. "Since my face has been despoiled, I feel dirty, as after twenty-four hours of travel on a train." She will always reproach herself for this weakness. "My lips have become black since the profaning kiss." She weeps with rage. Pietro will believe that it was quite simple for her, that it was not the first time.

Back in Nice, she awaits vainly the visit of Pietro Antonelli and the formal proposal of marriage. A letter addressed to Doctor Walitzky speaks of money difficulties and family matters which make it impossible for the young man to leave Rome at this time—while as to future plans there is only prudent and significant silence. (*É un affar da scrivere si o no!*) These pretexts covering his lamentable retreat

impose on Marie's pride the harshest penance that she could have imagined. She thinks with rage of the triumph she has furnished "this little Italian boy"; she fears the scandal—of course she exaggerates—which will result from this affair, for she dares not believe in Pietro's discretion.

She must have fallen on this Roman from the moon, from the old moon of old Rome! However, he was not the man of her destiny, for what she wants is "to go into society, to shine there, to have a supreme rank, be rich, have pictures, palaces, jewels, be the center of a circle that is political, literary, beneficent, gay." Pietro could not even form the first rung of that divine ladder at the top of which lay the satisfaction of her ambitions. But she cannot forget the disturbing or perfidious words of the young man regarding the distrust which Roman society felt toward these foreigners about whom nothing was known and much was said. This was sufficiently decisive and revealing to make Marie resolve to establish, in the eyes of these people, the noble status of her family. "I will go to Rome *with my father*, I will enter society, and they shall see!"

And that is how a deep wound to her *amour*

propre decided her trip to Russia and caused the more or less artificial reconciliation of a husband and wife who for years had not been able to endure the thought of seeing each other.

THE LORD OF GAVRONZI

"*THEY* do not know us. . . . They do not know who we are. . . . They say things about us." These laments recur as a refrain in all that she confides to her Diary at this period. But Marie does not content herself with sighing. In her circle, despite the apparent authority of Madame Bashkirtseff, the adolescent alone is capable of conceiving and carrying out a project. We shall observe many times that Marie is essentially constructive, essentially an executive. She knows what compromises the status of her nomadic family. The family ought to be able to show its chief. For, after all, Marie is not the daughter of an unknown father who has to be concealed. Monsieur Bashkirtseff is a nobleman, rich, esteemed in his country. If he can be seen, even glimpsed, particularly at Rome where the humiliation has been so keen, malicious gossip will cease

to circulate. Therefore Marie conceives the admirable project of trying to reconcile her father and mother, to interest the light and careless lord of Gavronzi in the future of his children and force him to resume his rôle, more or less honorary, in the incomplete family which even his intermittent presence will protect.

Marie hardly knows her father and she has heard him treated badly in the family conversations in which old grievances are eagerly rehashed. She has not seen him since she was a very small child. It has been repeated to her a hundred times that he does not care about her and that he is as little preoccupied with her present as with her future.

It seems that there are strenuous arguments now in this voluble family, after each new social disappointment, in every subsequent period of maternal anxiety. But Marie, who clings tenaciously to her reasonable idea, does not let herself be much influenced by cries, objections, mournful predictions. She even manages to convince everybody that she is right. Undoubtedly the grievances are too grave to permit the hope that husband and wife, long accustomed to separation, can ever try to live together

again. But one can imagine arrangements, an apparent understanding—and that will suffice—in the interest of the young girl and of all the family. Already the boy Paul has made long visits to his father, in fact is in Little Russia now, having a very good time farming and hunting, and quite neglecting to cultivate his mind. He has reported that the atmosphere of Gavronzi is favorable and that the young diplomat will be graciously received. July 27, 1876, the girl starts for Russia, with her Italian maid Amalia and her little negro Fortuné, called Chocolate, her living toy, her dog and doll, to whom, in the course of the journey, she will give, for her own amusement, lessons in history, ethics and philosophy. Her aunt accompanies her across Germany, as far as the frontier where one of the brothers of Madame Bashkirtseff is to receive her.

Marie confides to her Diary (July 30) that on the eve of entering Russia, without her aunt, without her mother, she weakens and is afraid. The journey, however, continues, under extravagant and paradoxical conditions, at first, like everything which touches the existence of this family. Arriving at Saint Petersburg August 4, Marie notes: "I stopped

at the Demouth hotel, accompanied by an uncle, a maid, a negro, followed by a great amount of baggage (ten trunks containing thirty gowns) and with fifty rubles in my pocket." She does not dare confess this pecuniary insufficiency to her uncle Stephen, "an excellent man without tact", nor to her friends the little Sapogenikoffs whom she has found here, with whom she gads about, telling them eagerly, dramatically, of her adventures in Rome. August 9, she repeats in her Diary of the trip: "I am without a sou. Agreeable situation. Doctor Tchernicheff was there and I wanted to ask him about a remedy for my hoarseness, but I had no money."

Three days afterward, at the moment of taking the train, she has to confess her financial straits. Money is obtained for her in the city, and she leaves, thoroughly humiliated by the adventure.

After a brief stay with her maternal uncles Stephen and Alexander, she is joined by her brother Paul who escorts her to the home of their father. She is uneasy, reserved, careful not to compromise her diplomatic rôle by premature effusions. She complains at once on not finding a carriage awaiting her.

She demands the splendid reception which a prodigal father ought to give his deserving daughter.

Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff greets her with facile effusiveness, then at times is reticent and on his guard. This blond giant, with eyes too pale, with figure somewhat awkward, somewhat heavy, observes curiously the adolescent, gracious and wilful, intelligent, modish, educated, who has been reared far from his eyes and without his aid. He is proud to produce her in the petty country society which frequents his home, and withal he feels a sort of vexation at the thought that the neighbors will attribute all the merits of this upbringing to the mother. The child understands. "Here I come," she writes, "challenging established relationships and trampling under my little feet hundreds of quarrels and millions of disagreeable circumstances." But almost at once she notes, not without pride: "I breathe freely; I am at my father's; he is one of the heads of the government, and I fear no flippancy, no disrespect." Every day, too, she writes to her mother: "This will do more good than all the medicines in the world."

The Bashkirtseff property is pleasantly located amid a landscape of hills, river, fine trees. In the

comfortable mansion, life is on the grand scale, while the manners are of extreme simplicity. There is a profusion of bronzes, of Sèvres and Saxony porcelains, and portraits of ancestors which Marie contemplates curiously, asking a thousand questions. Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff is not an unnatural father. He lavishes polite attentions and caressing words on his daughter. She, with her need of a protector, leans her head on the shoulder of the lord of Gavronzi, closing her eyes, in her manner of showing tenderness. But she can retain no illusions as to his character, which is essentially mobile and unstable. Her father is very difficult to get hold of, and to force him to listen to what she has to say she must treat him as a comrade. He says:

"I am a young man again!"

"Ah, papa, so that is your weak point. Very well. You shall be my elder brother and I will call you Constantine. Is that agreed?"

"Perfectly."

Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff does not hesitate to pose for his daughter's benefit as a model husband cruelly abandoned by his wife. A great portrait of Madame Bashkirtseff, painted after the separa-

tion, is prominently displayed. But as Paul and Marie have discovered in a photograph album the portrait of a danseuse, a Bohemian who brought about the conjugal catastrophe, Marie removes from the album the photographs of her grandparents, of her mother and her relatives, and puts them in her pocket, so that they shall remain no longer in such bad company.

Monsieur Bashkirtseff, however, is constantly expressing sorrow over his lost happiness.

"When they separated us," he says, "I was like a madman. I made a pilgrimage on foot to the Virgin of Ahtirna, but they say this virgin brings bad luck, and it is true, because afterward there was a worse misunderstanding than before. And I must tell you something else that will make you laugh. When you were living at Kharkoff, I went there alone, in secret. I took a fiacre and spied on your apartment. I stayed there a whole day to watch your mother pass, and then I returned without being seen."

"Touching, if true," she replies skeptically.

Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff keeps abusing his wife's relatives, who, he affirms, have destroyed

his happiness. But, as it happens, Marie has heard a thousand times that her father's sisters were the cause of the trouble. She makes no reply, for she wishes by all means to succeed in her delicate mission, but on returning to her room at night she has a desire to throw herself on the floor and cry. When his shafts strike her mother, "irreproachable victim", her heart ceases to beat, "then palpitates immediately like a bird in death agony."

However, time passes, monotonous and peaceful. In her Diary, Marie fixes the details of this stay at Gavronzi, where she accomplishes at least a sort of surface reconciliation between the two families Bashkirtseff and Babanine, where she goes hunting in boy's costume, dazzles local society—which is very much reduced—by a perhaps excessive elegance of dress which intimidates her father; where she plays the rôle of a great coquette among her young cousins, all more or less in love with her. But the diversions really are few and poor. Monsieur Bashkirtseff is very proud of a team of dun horses, and there are almost daily carriage rides. One of the hobbies of the master of the place is to fire the cannon. He has a battery of nine pieces which make a deafening racket

one night, to the great displeasure of Marie who is enjoying a moonlight revery. Another time the young people throw firecrackers at the feet of the governess. One night the father, the son and the daughter climb to the top of the bell tower and furiously sound the fire alarm. Rather stupid pleasures. Marie prefers to be carried in triumph on a carpet by her cousins, like Cleopatra; and she is seen sternly mastering her fear while mounting an unbroken horse which she has been told she cannot ride. She has her negro Chocolate sing songs of Nice. She dresses as a Little Russian, and is photographed in this costume, standing, sitting, lying, sleeping. She is expansive and familiar with the peasants. She electrifies everybody. She is called the devil, the demon, the hurricane, the tempest. But more often she yawns, for she must take part in interminable card games, wishing all the while that she were entering society, to realize, at her father's side, her revenge for the snubs of Rome.

"I am bored to tears," she confesses the 28th of September. "I want to go away. I am unhappy here. I am wasting my time, my life. I am miserable, I suffer." She makes the last weeks of this visit en-

durable only by initiating herself into "the splendid literature" of her country.

Finally Marie returns to France. She has the satisfaction of being followed by her father, who, incidentally, has let her pay all the expenses of her return trip, after having entertained her royally in comfortable Gavronzi where she has counted a round three score of domestics.

In the last days of November, 1876, Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff is in Paris, at the Grand Hotel, where he has an interview with his wife. They go to the Opera together. They have supper together. They discuss Marie's present situation and her future. The conversation becomes heated. There is wrangling, and grievances are exchanged in front of the cruelly humiliated girl.

"My father," she writes that night in her Diary, "comes to me and kisses my hair, my hands, my face, with plaintive hypocrisy, and says to me:

" 'The day when you have real need of help or protection, speak a word to me and I will reach you my hand.'

"I summoned up my last ounce of strength, and steadying myself, I answered:

" 'That day has come. Where is your hand?'

" 'You have no real need yet,' he hastened to say.

" 'Yes, I have!'

" 'No, no.'

"And he spoke of something else.

" 'Do you think, Father, the day will come when I shall need money? That day I will become a singer or a piano teacher, but I will ask nothing of you.' "

Let us, however, be just. Monsieur Bashkirtseff did offer Marie something. It was not an income nor a dowry. The lord of Gavronzi proposed to his daughter that she come to live with him in that country house where the girl, for three months, had been suffering agonies of boredom. At any rate, thanks to Marie, there had been a resumption of diplomatic relations between Monsieur Bashkirtseff and his wife. And from then on they saw each other intermittently; their relations became cordial, even friendly. At the end of this same year, Marie, her father and her mother appeared together at Rome as the girl had wished. They learned there of the death of Cardinal Antonelli.

"Well!" somebody told them. "Poor Pietro has lost his uncle."

"Did he inherit anything?"

"Yes, the table silver."

And the sentimental adventure which had begun in an intrigue of masks terminated in a burst of laughter. But its unforeseen consequence had been a conjugal semireconciliation, and, in spite of all, it was to leave in Marie's memory a romantic name, the thrilling recollection of a gaze and a voice, and the dazzling colors of a Roman festival.

COUNT "BIJOU"

THE Cardinalino romance is over. We now come to that of "Count Bijou". Frivolous titles, fleeting fancies. Marie, in February 1877, is sixteen years and two months old. She is no longer entirely a child but her advanced mental development has not brought maturity of feeling.

Her gestures, her exaltations, her mistakes, are those of all girls of her age, exaggerated, however, by her prodigious imagination in which any reality assumes fabulous proportions.

But how unfortunate this girl has been in her little amours! Very badly brought up, depending en-

tirely on books, developing in the dangerous atmosphere of that cosmopolitan society where only casino relations are formed, tormented by her maladjusted Slav soul and by a feverish lyricism which carries to the heights the most mediocre realities, this child, if she had not had solid forces of defense within her, would have been easy prey first to cosmopolite adventurers and afterward to the alarming dilettanti of Parisian life.

Imagine Moussia launched into the world in which Balzac displays his charming and lamentable Lucien de Rubempré. Certainly she would have made an idol of the adopted child of the convict Vautrin. At least for some weeks, for we know her to be more intelligent and clear-sighted than a Madame de Séritzy, than a Marquise d'Espard or a Clotilde de Grandlieu. She will soon be ready to read Balzac who will astonish her, will teach her, will even protect her. But for the present she has the illusions and the inexperience which make of her, in matters of the heart, a delicious little dupe. This must be understood before we proceed to her encounter, her flirtation and her break with "Count Bijou".

"Bijou," "treasure," a young girl's names for her

matinée idol, for the juvenile lead in the amorous comedy which her imagination is presenting to her susceptibility. Certainly Count Alexandre de Larderel never knew that Moussia had the habit of designating him by this tender appellation in her childish confidences to Rosalie, her devoted maid and constant, lifelong attendant.

Let us see at once who Bijou is. Not now is it a child sternly supervised by an ecclesiastical family. He is a grown man who has manner, social presence, and a great many more debts even than Pietro. Marie depicts him as an amiable cavalier, a little taller than she, with a blond mustache and dark chestnut hair, eyes grayish, somber and hard. She has noticed that he has many gold teeth, "having worn out his natural teeth by eating up money". He is reckless, devil-may-care. Courteous, besides, and saying, to her wonder, nothing but what will bear repetition. His father is French, his mother an Italian of the family of the princes Salviati, allied to the Aldobrandini and the Borghesi. His sister is married to the son of the morganatic wife of King Victor-Emmanuel, that beautiful Rosina, Countess de' Mirafiori, who, since the death of the queen, in 1855, has

occupied the greater part of the vast and hospitable heart of the Galantuomo, the "Green Gallant" of Italy. Cavour had difficulty maintaining himself against Rosina de' Mirafiori who, in 1860, tried to prevent his return to power. But if the countess managed to stir up a good deal of strife in the royal family, she was unable to gather around herself a court, for the sovereign restricted her to a military entourage. Care was taken to marry very young the favorite's son, who, too close to his mother, was becoming an encumbrance. An heiress was found, rich and pretty, Mademoiselle de Larderel, and he was made to marry her. That is how the Larderels found themselves allied, morganatically, to the royal family of Italy.

Later Marie will learn that "*cher Alexandre*", from the age of fifteen, has passed his nights festively, that he gets drunk every evening, that his family has had to have him declared incompetent to manage his own affairs, that he enjoys a very low esteem in his circle and that almost no one will receive him.

Marie has already met the Count de Larderel informally in Rome, at the theaters and at the skating

rink during the time of her romance with Pietro. She sees him again in Naples, in the Hotel du Louvre, where she has stopped with her mother, her cousin Dina, and the maid Rosalie, in February 1877. She has come here at the command of Doctor Fauvel, who treats her pulmonary ailment and who will send her every year to sunny countries, without ever suspecting the fantastic way she follows the régimens he prescribes.

Marie notices Count de Larderel one day passing on horseback on the Chiaga, his French figure standing out sharply from the Neapolitan background. The next night she sees him again and flirts with him under the protection of her mask at the charity *veglione* of the Teatro San Carlo, to which she has gone with her family. Larderel jokes about himself, about his far from beautiful nose, about his debts. He amuses Marie, recognizes her certainly under her mask; and we see that it begins exactly as it began with Pietro. Childish actions follow: Marie takes it into her head to go, with her mother, on board the train which is carrying Larderel to Florence, whither a mysterious affair calls him. They accompany him as far as the first station. Some days later, the maid

Rosalie says she has heard that Larderel is very much in love with Moussia, and this gossip interests the girl greatly. In the Carnival month one really must have some romantic fantasies. Marie, from behind her curtain, observes strange persons prowling about, mysteriously waving handkerchiefs and leading bands of serenaders. She learns that a young Austrian girl "has eaten a box of poisonous matches" in amorous despair. "But she has been saved, and now love has assumed extraordinary proportions on both sides." This story touches Moussia seriously. "It is not granted to everybody to love like that."

Moreover, she is thinking of marriage, and others are trying to help her. The Russian Consul, "who is a monkey of ugliness and an angel of kindness", busies himself finding eligible candidates. Impecunious Neapolitan princes are offered. The little Russian is much talked about in Naples. At the home of the Countess Soukeneff, an aristocratic Slav center and "nest of scandal", the rumor circulates that Marie is a rich heiress, and it is told that her mother has bought her a bed for fifty thousand francs. A fat Prussian quadragenarian, Count Doenhoff, courts her—"Oh my vaporous and celestial dreams!"

During all her stay Marie will be noting in her Diary the harmonious names of the Neapolitan nobility, Portineri, Carracciola, Santasilia, the Duke of Carmignano, the Duke of Melito, the Marquis of Campo Marino, the Marquis of Pascarola, especially the Prince di Melissano, a great friend of the Count de Larderel. The prince Giovanni Borghese comes to Naples and stays in the hotel where the Bashkirtseffs are. He has very black hair, parted from the neck to the forehead, nose long and circumspect, eye downcast, bristling mustache, "carriage slow and hypocritical". A real great name of Rome. Marie thinks for a moment that it would not be unpleasant to be Princess Borghese, as a sister of Napoleon's was. But the faithful Rosalie informs her mistress that the gentleman wears open-work silk doublets, that he is lazy and effeminate, that while conversing with his confessor he inundates himself with perfumes, and that he turns up the sleeves of his shirt to make the chambermaids admire the whiteness of his arms. Larderel is better than that at any rate. And for the romantic element which is necessary to a budding romance, Moussia learns that Count Alexandre has just fought a duel in Florence after sur-

prising a love letter written to his mistress—a pantomime actress, la Righi—by one of his friends, the Marquis Nicolini. Larderel returns to Naples, his arm in a sling. Moussia is in transports. Count Bijou appears much more attractive than the provincial lions she has been seeing. "For her ideal" something else would be necessary, perhaps.

Madame Bashkirtseff, prudent for once, asserts that Count Alexandre cannot be considered as a possible husband, being almost an outcast. "Oh, God and Holy Virgin Mary, do not let this become a serious matter for me!" the girl implores. She is beset with emotion and studies her new state. "I am like a high-pitched musical instrument," she says, "accurate, but exaggerated." She has the feverish curiosity to see true love born in her, as she will have, later, the tragic curiosity to gaze into the face of death. "I pay attention to everything. I am like the patient and indefatigable chemist who passes nights before his retorts so as not to miss the awaited and desired instant." It is that alone which gives a psychological value to this poor sentimental adventure with a lazy, worthless drunkard and ruined gambler. As the affair interests us only subjectively, let us

pass rapidly over its objective realities. In a family excursion to Sorrento, Larderel being of the party, the conversation becomes extremely tender between Marie and "the sublimely shameless". He tells her of a little daughter, Alexandrine, whom he has had by la Righi. She is being brought up according to his ideas, and ought to become an extraordinary person because she drinks nothing but cognac. Larderel himself is somewhat drunk at the end of the day, and Marie will soon find that that is the normal state of her "Count Bijou". In the course of their conversation they speak of Faust, and amuse themselves inverting the situation: Faust wronged by Marguerite. "Faust wronged," Marie says, "would be simply ridiculous. Marguerite abandoned has nothing to do but die."

Let us pass on. Marie discourses at great length about this petty adventure which keeps her passionately preoccupied for several weeks. It is in this period that we see her boldly address King Victor-Emmanuel who has come to Naples to witness some races in which Larderel is to ride. Everybody has been scandalized, but the gallant king has smiled, and as he is given to understand that Madame Bash-

kirtseff has ordered her daughter to her room to do penance, he sends an aide-de-camp to ask that the sentence be suspended. As for Count Bijou he mounts his horse in the trial heat and Moussia prays heaven that he may take a fall so that she may be permitted to play the rôle of romantic nurse at his bedside. The prayer is only half granted. Larderel, drunk, is thrown to the sand, but breaks no bones. As he cannot fail to perceive the emotion which he has caused the child, he finally speaks to her of marriage in that detached, impertinent tone which composes his special charm. If they marry, Marie must adopt little Alexandrine, Larderel's daughter by la Righi.

This suffices to bring back Marie's good sense. She asks sarcastically:

"Tell me, monsieur, do I seem to be trying to marry you at all cost?"

It is a dismissal. Of course she has a reaction of anger and mortification, the family weeps. She declares she will throw herself out of the fifth-story window, will catch a mortal malady. But after some days, despair is a memory.

One of the count's hangers-on, Commander Mar-

cuard—reddish beard, fat face, blue eyes—obstinately insists on consoling the girl. He is even "too beneficent", because he defames Larderel with stories of monstrous borrowings, fraudulent dealings with usurers. Moussia dreams that Larderel's daughter is a cat, then a little black dog, and that she has this undesirable animal on her knees. She dreams also that one of the count's lights-o'-love shows her her naked legs: "Sure sign of affront." She sees the unworthy Alexandre at the skating rink, pale, dirty, ill-groomed, drunk. The ex-Bijou announces to Marie that he has asked the king for permission to enlist in the Russian army, which is preparing to go to war with Turkey.

He has so many debts that he does not know where to turn. Marie is in a state "to climb a wall". They meet again at the fashionable trotting races. She observes that Larderel is quite ugly in his gray hat, that his nose "is not irreproachable in the sunlight". They dine and dance at the cabaret. By miracle, Larderel is not drunk. He has wit. A letter from Madame Romanoff arrives, full of information: this Larderel should not be permitted to enter a home in which there are young girls. But already

the grand passion has spent itself. Marie is simply annoyed, and she is vexed to find that there is so little tragedy in the awakening. With her habit of analysis, she busies herself studying her sentimental ego on the occasion of the Larderel case. It certainly seems to her that in this infatuation there has been no care for fortune, no ambition, no desire of conquest. She would simply like to be aware that a man had aroused in her the unreasoning urge of a heart delivered from the cold discipline of the mind. If the urge has had that spontaneity, that simplicity, she is tremendously gratified, having proved to herself that she is capable of loving. In other words, the object of love being held indifferent or undesirable, Marie is no longer concerned with anything but the quality of the sentiment which has been able to manifest itself in her. She compares this with the Hamilton case (vanity), and the Antonelli case (a sickly fancy, she says) and, excluding the personality of Larderel himself, she decides that the Larderel adventure marks a sort of progress in her sentimental speculations.

That is all she wishes to retain, and all that she desires us to retain of this affair. April 28 she writes

that of her two-and-a-half month stay in Naples there remains to her nothing, not even a regret, not even a desire to return one day to this city. She enters Florence in high spirits. With her customary enthusiasm for the great, she visits the houses of Galileo, Machiavelli, Alfieri, Benvenuto Cellini, and the Santa Croce church with its tombs of illustrious men.

Forgetting her Dante a bit, she thinks Florence "miraculous". She passes in front of "the Larderel palace" where the family of the sorry Alexandre reside. Marie meets this family, the mother, the sister, the brother, on the drive, at the races, as she also meets la Righi and her daughter. Strangely, "her family-in-law", as Moussia says laughing, direct charming looks and smiles at her. It cannot be doubted that the titbits of Neopolitan gossip are known in Florence. A sort of ambassador, the Commander Marcuard already named, transmits to the Bashkirtseff ladies a kind of proposal. The affairs of Count Alexandre could be arranged with a million, which would entirely liberate his fortune, and leave him thirty thousand francs income. In consideration of which his family would pardon him and receive

him as the prodigal son. Hence the smiles of the Larderel family.

"Do you want me to make him a loan at fifty percent?" asks Moussia ironically.

"Oh, what is asked is the purchase of an annuity. Do you wish——"

"Heavens, no, that would be a bad investment."

For the little Russian is thinking that with a million one could buy oneself a prince.

Toward the middle of May, when Marie returns to Nice, she has recovered from her Neapolitan amour so completely that she tells it from the roofs, with a thousand pertnesses of which the least is to call her mandolin case "the sarcophagus of Alexandre".

ROME OR PARIS?

CAN any believe that all Marie Bashkirtseff's memories of Italy will be contained in these two childish love affairs? Her heart was duped there, but her mind has been flooded with light. Florence, Rome, Rome especially, and their prodigious evocations will remain the enchantments

of a lifetime. Rome will be for the young girl not only the Rome of the Pincio and the Corso. Very often her fancy will go wandering in the Campagna of the aqueducts and of the ruined tombs, that plain, rolling like the ocean in a storm, whose stretches are browsed by flocks tended by Vergilian shepherds. She has met, among the ruins, the shades of the heroes of Livy and Tacitus. At the Capitol she has seen the folds of togas shaken by the millennial breeze. The Rome of papal rule has appeared to her also in the old palaces of the fallen princes, where, in Stendhal's phrase which she will adopt, the grandiose, covered with cobwebs and dust, "casts tragedy over the soul". Especially vivid remains the triumphal dawn and the melancholy twilight on these historic stones. What sacred emotion at the memory of the miraculous city, the fascinating city! "If I loved a man," she will write later, "I would take him to Rome to tell him so in face of the sunset, before the divine cupola." It seems to her that at Rome only, where one seems at the summit of the world, can she satisfy her dreams of the universe. The Rome of the historians, the artists, the poets, will not have been diminished for her by the social Rome which has

made her suffer: "I recall only the poetic and artistic Rome, and to that Rome I kneel." Rome and also Florence and all the Italy of the arts, for it was the revelation of the Museums which decided Marie to devote herself to the career of an artist.

Marie Bashkirtseff ought logically to have lived in Rome, Barrès has observed. Yes, if this ardent child endowed with complex forces could have been content to live in dreams; but she felt herself first of all a creature of effort and action; she felt that she would not develop in a completed and stationary civilization. She renounced the immobile grandeur of Rome to live in Paris in which movement is perpetual and which, she says, is "the departure from everything".

CHAPTER III

Paris, the Departure from Everything

PARIS

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF is in Paris. Marie is not yet seventeen. By one of those decisions which her submissive family always obeys, she has bidden farewell to the pleasant scenes of her April, has put adolescence behind her.

The villa of the Promenade des Anglais has been let. There is no intention of returning. All the family are installed in the Grand Hotel, the mother, the aunt, the cousin, grandfather Babanine, Doctor Walitzky, the domestic Triphon, the negro Chocolate, the maid Rosalie, and the four dogs. A temporary arrangement which cannot last, for they are badly crowded, and though we all like our comfort, Marie simply cannot live unless she has complete privacy. Moussia would like a house as spacious as that in Nice, of which she alone would occupy a great share. But their finances permit the family at

first only to rent an apartment. They leave the Grand Hotel to camp at number 71 Champs-Élysées. They will take more permanent lodgings, in 1878, at number 67 Avenue de l'Alma, from which they will move, the following year, to number 34 Avenue Montaigne, into a splendid apartment, with drawing rooms which can hold two hundred guests. The house in the rue de l'Ampère will furnish the setting for the last scenes of this story.

Wherever they are, the home life of these Russians continues without change of habits. In the dining room there is a table constantly set. From morning till night an enormous samovar is heating water for a continuous tea. This dining room is a place of intimate gatherings and a center of voluble chatter. Greek orthodox priests are almost always to be met there. The numerous Babanines, uncles, aunts, cousins, with multiple pretexts for making trips to France, take turns staying with this household in which the family spirit is very strong. One of them, however, has made himself distinctly undesirable. This is Marie's Uncle George, Dina's father, a gambler, a drunkard, who has had to flee from Russia after a bad affair with the police of Poltava.

Madam Bashkirtseff has not wished to receive this black sheep in her home. When he is quite at the end of his rope, Uncle George goes to the servants and sends them to Monsieur Babanine with requests for money. For this unfortunate, Marie, in her Diary, has words of indulgence and pity which do great credit to her magnanimity.

Moussia has organized for herself a personal life within the life of the group. Not that she is detached from the group, by any means. On the return from the trip to Russia in 1876, she has made the poignant exclamation: "Never, never will I break myself in two again!" But her studious intellect, her aspirations, her esthetic tastes, accord very ill with the atmosphere and habits of the house. During the first period of the residence in Paris, the intimate visitors are ignorant, mediocre, petty. She resembles none. She is constantly irritated by the mighty talk on tiny subjects, the disputation which is ceaseless and aimless.

Moussia does not often linger in the society of the guests of her mother or of her aunt. During the meals, served in Russian style, she sits on a low chair, usually with an open book beside her plate, and after

the dessert, while the others remain, she takes refuge in her studio or in her room, where Dina joins her. At night she works long after everyone else is in bed. At midnight, at two o'clock in the morning, often at dawn, a white figure creeps stealthily about the apartment, opening doors with the precautions of a burglar so as not to arouse and alarm the household. And Moussia seats herself at the dining-room table and nibbles strawberries, or she takes apples to her room and roasts them over essence of violets, while reading Victor Hugo's "History of a Crime".

Moussia is very fond of these solitary vigils. How she would like to be able to go away alone, to travel alone! "One can go shopping with the family, to the Bois with the family, sometimes to the theater; one can be ill in the midst of the family, take cures with the family, in short, do everything with them that is intimate and necessary. But to travel with the family! That is as if one took one's pleasure waltzing with one's aunt!" She is often rude and brusque. She is guilty of impertinences for which she reproaches herself sternly. Once when her mother is going to Russia to attend to one of the interminable lawsuits of the family, Marie notes in

her Diary: "If mamma were to die without seeing me again, I would spend my life mourning my inability to make amends to her for my unkindness. I prefer anything in the world to that. . . . I would rather go blind, be paralyzed . . . I should be pitiful, but to lose mamma under these conditions—it would seem to me that I had killed her."

What irritates her above all is that solicitude of which she is the object, the touching but tactless care of "her mothers" to protect her health. These poor women, and Dina too, go so far as to take turns sleeping in front of Marie's door when she has a cough. They have to quarrel with her to get her to shut her window, to cover herself warmly, to keep from eating cold food, especially ices. Everyone is constantly reminding her of the malady which she wants to forget. There are crises of anger, followed by tears of despair. Are not "her mothers" taking all her energy away from her by forever repeating to her that she is nothing but weakness?

From the moment of her arrival in Paris, Marie has concentrated on the attainment of her double aim: to become a famous painter, to conquer by her talent and by a great marriage a place of esteem,

and, if possible, of dominance, in society. Three years before—and one does not cease to marvel at this precocity—Marie had already established for her guidance a moral scheme which must be quoted: "If one does not go in too deep one can live happily among men. Do not count on friendship, nor gratitude, nor fidelity, nor honesty. Rise bravely above human miseries into a place between men and God. Take all you can from life, with zest; do no ill to your fellows; let not a single instant of pleasure escape; arrange for yourself a life that is comfortable, lively, and magnificent, elevate yourself as much as possible over other creatures." That is the program. It will be attacked. It is not that of a mystic. It is that of an ephemeral anxious to live. It bespeaks a somewhat bitter experience of human encounters. It is written in proud words, but this pride will have high visions and courage which will save it from being disagreeable.

To accomplish the conquest of Paris, Marie is well aware that the family escutcheon must be polished, the background put in order, the home atmosphere reëstablished, that social acquisitions must be made. Shortly after their arrival in Paris the Bash-

kirtseffs become acquainted with the Bonapartist deputy Gavini de Campile and his wife, an agreeable couple well connected in Parisian society and provided with a considerable fortune. Through the Gavinis the family will be introduced to the inner circle of Bonapartists. Through them and Madame de Mousay they will be associated with Paul de Cassagnac who is to play a decisive rôle in the sentimental life of Marie.

But let us take a moment to note the evolution and transformation of this family nucleus with which henceforth we shall be occupied only incidentally. Between 1877 and 1880 the group is reduced. In 1877, the twelfth of January, the "angelic" Doctor Walitzky dies. The day before, he had said to Marie, in a half joking, half melancholy tone, "*Addio, signorina!*" to remind her of Italy. In the night he had tried to say his farewell to Monsieur Babanine, his venerable and ailing friend whom he would attend no more. But, hardly out of his room, he was able only to make the sign of the cross three times and cry out, "Adieu!" in a loud voice. Madame Romanoff, and a servant who had run up, received a corpse into their arms. For

the first time Marie found herself in the presence of death. For the first time, too, she confesses, she shed tears which were not of self, not of anger. "It is an irreparable loss. One can never bring oneself to believe that such a character has existed in real life. There are people like him only in books. May he hear me from the place in which he now is, and if ever he has had cause to complain of me, he will pardon me, because of my profound esteem, my sincere affection and my regrets which come from the depths of my soul." After seven months the patient follows his doctor. Monsieur Babanine dies August 29, 1878. He had been senile and crotchety; he was paralyzed, almost blind—but cultivated, full of memories, and he worshiped Marie, who, on the first trip to Italy, had tried to convey to him, in amused and picturesque letters, her impressions of Florence. Of late years the invalid had lost the use of speech. When the young girl had to go to Soden to take a cure, in July 1878, the departure caused the grandfather such emotion that Marie hesitated to start. When she arrived at her destination, she made long prayers to find Monsieur Babanine living on her return. When the old man died, while the family

mourned demonstratively, she herself arranged the funeral, with silent tears. "White muslin to be hung everywhere; this whiteness is for the honesty of the soul which has fled, for the purity of the heart which beats no more."

But now another event, which is less mournful, but which causes prolonged agitation in the family and threatens dramatic consequences: the marriage of Paul. As we know, Marie's brother has lived with Father Bashkirtseff in Gavronzi since 1875. "Paul does not know how to conduct himself," Marie writes in August 1876. "He is just like father and I see why mamma was so unhappy. He will never be anything but a gentleman-farmer." Marie's portrait of Paul Bashkirtseff at twenty is to be found in the museum of Nice. Physiognomy without high lights, little mustache, great sensual lip, curly chestnut hair, cheeks and chin already very puffy. At twenty, Paul Bashkirtseff seemed thirty or thirty-five. Big, strong, fat, he was "beautiful as a Roman statue", Marie says. In 1879 he had become smitten with a young girl of Gavronzi, Mademoiselle Alexandrine Patchenko. The family was honorable but modest, with little fortune. Paul Bashkirtseff, very much in love,

promptly betrothed himself to the beautiful Alexandrine, who was mad about him. At once there was great commotion in the Bashkirtseff family, which contemplated other alliances for the children.

The lord of Gavronzi, very vain as we have said, was the most intractable. Marie, at first, was exasperated. In March 1879, Paul being in Paris, she made futile attempts to prevent him from returning to Russia. Furious at not having been understood, she wrote to her brother: "You want to marry and live quietly with a good little woman whom you have imagined to be what you would desire her to be. That is very virtuous, very respectable, and I wish you could find this happiness. However, you will not find it in the affair of which you speak. My dear boy, my poor imbecile, one does not marry at twenty in your position. One marries at twenty when one is independent or when one finds an extraordinary match, or else when one is crazy, and then one marries a cook, a prostitute, or a gaudy old widow. You have been captured by a young girl who perhaps is charming, but who certainly is not suitable for you. She is the same age as you. She will marry you because in the country one is in a great hurry to get

married, but she laughs at you. Go to the city, run around with actresses, lead a dissipated life. . . . You will come away cured and you will thank me for having given you wicked advice for once."

And here are reflections which reveal a mind singularly objective and mature:

"Now I am going to speak to you a language of figures which is clear and irrefutable. You are twenty. You have nothing but your allowance. You have no means of making money, you have neither career nor position. Our father is forty-seven, and you must expect that he will live from twenty-five to thirty years longer, as is more than probable. At his death, in thirty years, you will not have much, he will have gone through it all—and if there is anything left you will not get it for thirty years. Do you think that your wife, at the end of three months of marriage, will be content with life in a village? She will want to see society and have clothes. The most modest, the most sober, the most severely brought up are like that. And when you have nothing to offer her but a mediocrity which is very near to the most cruel poverty, it will be a hell every day, and would be even if you were two angels.

You count on mamma's weakness, but count also on me. If you commit the crime you contemplate, I swear to you I will make civil war on you, and if, in spite of all I have been able to say to you, you persist, I wash my hands of this mess and pray God to get you out of it."

This imperious letter, which Monsieur Pierre Borel has recently brought to our attention, is of a real documentary interest, for it throws light on the situation, at that period, of the Bashkirtseff family, and bears witness to the practical clear-sightedness of this girl of eighteen. For Marie's objections are full of common sense even when they are hotly expressed. Her letter was certainly dictated by reason, but, as was usual with Moussia, her heart intervened at once. The cruel letter, prudently withheld by the maid Rosalie who was commissioned to mail it, was not sent. "When the occasion presents itself to cause pain—after all, one thinks twice." At the end of this same year 1879, the resistance from the Paris side has been overcome by the lovers. In December, so that Mademoiselle Alexandrine Patchenko may have a happy new year, Marie writes to her: "My brother will bring you

mamma's consent. I wish you all happiness. And I hope you will make our dear Paul as happy as he deserves to be. While waiting to see you among us, I embrace you cordially."

Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff, the father, is more difficult to win over. In 1880, he still refuses his consent vehemently. Monsieur Patchenko, the young girl's father, is equally inexorable. Paul, exasperated, takes it into his head to carry off the dear Alexandrine in the most romantic fashion, and this creates a fine scandal. The following year, however, everything is arranged. The marriage takes place in February, at the home of one of the Babanines, Uncle Michael. For the occasion Madame Bashkirtseff goes to Russia, and one has the impression that the household is reconciled. The day after the ceremony, the young bride, "pretty as a love", is received at Gavronzi, courteously but without enthusiasm, by Monsieur Bashkirtseff, who will always manifest some rancor toward her.

From that time, Paul lives simply with his wife, then with his children, on a little estate in Poltava, visiting Paris from to time. Marie is very attentive to her sister-in law. On a visit to Russia in June

1881, she amuses herself confecting—with the aid of three other women, it is true—a gown for Alexandrine, whom she calls Nini, "gentle creature, so good, so docile, who kisses my hands and considers me a creature apart". She also paints her portrait, and when the young woman comes to Paris she gives her a very beautiful emerald, regretting only that she must deprive Dina of this gift, for Dina "adores jewels".

ARTIST OR PRINCESS?

OF the child and the adolescent Marie retains only the youthful features and the love of pranks which sometimes are quite mad. She seems now an entirely different person from the Moussia of the preceding winters. Her desire for knowledge will keep its universal scope, but her effort of realization has henceforth one goal: she will be a painter.

How true is this vocation? She has always sketched a good deal. In her earliest childhood her sketches of objects or of figures aroused the admiration of those about her—but we know that those

about her admired everything she did. She took intermittent drawing lessons, without consistent method. Her taste for drawing, for painting, for sculpture, developed, as we have seen, in Italy, and indicated to her the path she was to take, out of vanity, she confesses to us, but which she will follow out of passionate love of art. She got herself admitted in October 1877 to the Atelier Julian. Further on, we shall learn of her unsparing, her suicidal, efforts to become a great artist.

Application to her art, however, does not prevent Marie from thinking of marriage, which will change her atmosphere and give her new and powerful means of developing her personality. "Marriage is the only career for women. Men have thirty-six chances, women only one, like the zero at roulette." (September 30, 1878.) Her entire destiny depends on her choice. Although she says, pertly, that "men must be accessories for strong women", she dreams without cease of a love marriage which will also be a marriage of reason, according to her ambitious views. "One must remember, when marrying, that one is not taking an apartment by the month, but is buying a house; one must be able to find all one's

comforts there; one cannot overlook a lack of rooms, as in a rented lodge, and a Russian motto says that 'additions bring bad luck.'"

Marie would not consent for anything in the world to buy a man who happened to please her; that would be to lose him. "To buy a Russian, for example, would be frightful." She reads with disgust, in the society news, of matrimonial combinations which are financial mergers. She wishes to unite herself with a man who will love her truly. "Without love I should be the most wretched of women." But he must have a fortune, not by any means for the vain pleasures which money gives, but for the necessary independence which it assures. She wishes also to be partly beholden to her husband for a considerable social position, secured by his name and title. Here the reasoned ambitions of the young woman continue the dreams of the child. But in return for what she asks of the as yet unknown husband, what can she offer him, besides her beauty, her intelligence, the somewhat perturbing charm of her exceptional culture? The people who enter the blue drawing room or are invited to dine, after the definite establishment of the Bashkirtseffs

in Paris, have the impression that the family is wealthy. There are five or six domestics, carriages with fine horses, coupé in the morning, landau for afternoon. New dresses constantly, for Marie especially, and the family is served by the best couturiers, bootmakers, modistes of the capital. "Laferrière makes marvels of simplicity; Rebaux, miracles of hats; Ferry, poems of shoes; Worth, a bonbon of a dress; Dupuy, a charm of a parasol; Jouvin, gloves fit for a Chinese princess."

For her gowns alone Marie spends from eight to ten thousand francs every year. In July 1880, as she thinks of spending the summer at Biarritz—she changes her mind and does not go—she takes an inventory of her trunks: twenty white gowns at an average of three hundred francs apiece; fifteen hats; twelve pairs of shoes; a whole rich assortment of stockings, gloves, umbrellas, coats; representing a total expenditure of about ten thousand francs. And today we must multiply this figure by five or six to judge of the importance of this outlay for a young woman's wardrobe fifty years ago.

From 1880 to 1884, when money seems to arrive in abundance—the two sisters have liquidated their

shares of the heritage from Grandfather Babanine —the family lives on a scale of about two hundred thousand francs a year, but without regularity, in an alternation of furious prodigalities and sudden economies. Moussia's caprices, those realized as well as those contemplated, would be sufficient to bankrupt the family for a month. Back in Nice, had not Moussia demanded a race horse, for the pleasure of having silks and a jockey?

It was for her dear niece that Madame Romanoff bought the villa on the Promenade des Anglais, for which four hundred thousand francs were offered toward 1882, and which was sold a short time ago for more than a million.

One day Marie and her "two mothers" visit an exhibition of jewels at the Hotel Drouot. The girl gives some attention to two great brilliants which, she estimates, must come to twenty-five thousand francs at auction. The next day Moussia finds these brilliants in a case under her napkin. She sleeps with them clutched in her hand all that night, after which she thinks of them no more. She has habits of luxury so natural that she cannot imagine being obliged to do without them.

Though she has no other personal revenue than the pocket money given her capriciously enough by "her mothers", Marie is assured that she shall not marry without dowry. "I shall have an income of forty thousand francs," she writes in her Diary in 1878. "At least sixty thousand," she says later. When there is an offer to buy her villa at Nice, she exclaims, "I can consider that I am rich; I have an income of a hundred thousand francs."

Let us not examine these figures too closely. But we cannot doubt that to the persons who see how she lives Marie is a rich heiress. Madame Romanoff, the treasurer of the family, does not conceal the fact that she has made a will in favor of her niece. From the material point of view, then, it cannot seem excessive if the girl takes for granted a marriage with a young man who has two hundred thousand francs revenue. It is amusing to see her establish—with minute foresight—her future budget as a young matron of consequence. But she also requires social prestige in her husband. She would like to marry a prince, but not in Russia, nor in Naples, where princes are cheap. Royalty itself is perhaps not inaccessible. Has not Marie known in Nice the

Ketchko family, the father a colonel in the service of Russia, the daughter Nathalie, " a beauty without finesse, with her great Moldavian nose", who looks like "a queen's follower"? Well! Mademoiselle Ketchko, almost without dowry, has married Milan, the reigning prince of Serbia, during the Balkan troubles, international difficulties, war, when a queen could play a historic rôle. Why Nathalie and not Moussia? If, however, the ambitious girl desired union with a Serbian prince, she could find a ready occasion within her intimate acquaintance. One of the descendants of the great Karageorge, the old Prince Karageorgevitch, and his wife and their two sons, two likable young men of eighteen and twenty, Alexis and Bojidar, are constant visitors to the house. Marie calls the young princes "her well-groomed team of ponies". But the fortunes of the Karageorgevitches are really too reduced and this dynasty in exile appears at the time to have little chance of remounting the throne. Marie will content herself with regarding Bojidar as her favorite "pony". He is a friend the more agreeable for having a passionate love of art. Marie will give him lessons, take him to Julian's, and will be as-

sured, to the end, of his tender devotion. But Bojidar could never be the desired lover or the possible husband. He is a child, too, and seems to her the more a child now that she has met a man who has immediately taken possession—it can no longer be doubted today—of her imagination and her heart.

THE MUSKETEER OF THE EMPRESS

PAUL de Cassagnac!

If Marie Bashkirtseff had undertaken to write a book on the famous men of France in 1878, she would have been sentimentally moved to reserve a place of favor for the fiery imperialist whose explosive polemic and insolent courage aroused storms in parliament and shattered the apathy of public opinion. This man, who was truly a man, this Frenchman so French in the emphatic nature of his faults and virtues, naturally, the moment he appeared, drove back into their mediocre shade the unsubstantial figures of a "Cardinalino" and of a "Count Bijou".

The numerous duels of Paul de Cassagnac with select adversaries were matter of popular legend.

The grace and force of his conversation were a charm to which few women could remain indifferent. Violent defender of a deserted cause, intransigent dynastic, orthodox imperialist, dogmatic Catholic, the man, in his elemental passion for action and combat, was loyal, disinterested, chivalrous. Moussia's Plutarch would hardly have included him among the illustrious. But no contemporary could dispute him the title of a man of the day, and perhaps in the eyes of many this notoriety was the beginning of true fame.

Paul de Cassagnac! Marie loved to imagine this "musketeer of the empress" rivaling the historic gestures of the great condottieri of the past who fashioned at their will the destinies of states. She saw him overturning a feeble, divided, vapid regime, donning the regalia of the Eagle to receive on the steps of the Élysée the young Napoleon to whom he would restore the imperial crown. What a rôle for the wife of this restorer of a dynasty, how enticing to a woman of great ambitions the idea of being the center of a historic salon which should eclipse the memory of the salons of the Princess Troubetzkoi and the Countess de Lieven.

Marie had met Paul de Cassagnac for the first time in 1876 at the home of a friend. The girl wore, that day, one of those filmy white gowns which went so well with her blonde beauty. But on her feet were boudoir slippers—she had not had time to put on her shoes in her haste to get to Madame de Mousay's where, she had been told, the ardent defender of the Eagle and of the altar was visiting. "The ingenuous gentleness of his great arrogant face" made a strong impression on Moussia, who was never to forget the pleasure of this first meeting. She admits at once that a love for this man would be no passing fancy. "I fear," she writes, "that it will develop with time, while caprices may come and go, as they have come and gone; that it will become *serious*, like all ideas of slow formation, and not be more violent at one stage than at another."

Then, in Russia, in Naples, "amid recollections of Antonelli or of Alexandre de Larderel," she has said to herself that these puppets have meant little to her and that only Paul de Cassagnac could ever be her grand passion. It must be observed that for the first time, doubtless, Marie has met a character

powerful enough to dominate her imperious personality.

Let us consider this, perhaps fugitive, certainly seldom perceptible, aspect of the little barbarian's mentality and sensibility. She admits the pleasure of submission to a superior energy. "All my life," she writes, "I have sought to place myself *voluntarily* under an illusory domination of some sort . . . but the men who offered themselves to this experience were of such mediocrity that they inspired me only with disgust." Would Paul de Cassagnac have been the master she dreamed of? Discussing with herself the eventuality of a union with this creature of energy, she says—and here she is very Slavic—that she would be so afraid of him that she would make of her skin " a rug for his feet".

Moreover, Moussia discovers that there is in Cassagnac and her a strange identity of impulse, ambition, violence. "I am envious of his adventures, his successes, his follies." She would like to have already realized herself in her sphere as Paul de Cassagnac has realized himself in his.

The physique of the man? This cadet of Armag-

nac has not the tall figure, the arrogance which had charmed her in that lordly Anglo-Saxon, the Duke of Hamilton. Nor has he "the beauty of an archangel" like Pietro Antonelli. He has not the breeding of that drunkard Larderel. But in his eyes are ardor, tenderness, generosity, of a kind to fascinate women. "He is not more handsome than no-matter-who," she says, "but there are not two faces so proud, two shapes so vulgar," and you will please give this word *vulgar* the most sympathetic meaning it can have. In an intimate conversation, the "caressing air" of the great battler disarms her. Then in her there is a diffused exaltation, a treasured weakness in the presence of the strong man who seems to her the good and the just; she dreams of delightful chats, of tender affection, of spontaneous confidence. "Boarding school girls have chums like that in books," she writes. "I have never had one."

In the Bonapartist world into which the Gavinis had introduced them in 1876, Marie had met Monsieur Rouher, the center and chief of the old guard of the party. She had adopted the persons rather than the ideas. "It is singular," she writes, "how

much I understand the benefits of the Republic since I have become a Bonapartist."

Nevertheless, devotion to unfortunate dynasties —to the cause of the prince imperial, of Don Carlos —touched her, inflamed her, and made her understand Cassagnac.

It was on the occasion of a "sending of cards" for the Chamber by the deputy of the Gers, and of a sufficiently audacious prank of the young girl that the real acquaintance between Paul de Cassagnac and Marie Bashkirtseff began. January 12, 1878, Marie and her brother Paul sought in vain a place in the Versailles train, the train of the deputies. Cassagnac saw them in this difficulty.

"What?" he asks, solicitously. "You have not found a compartment free?"

He deserts his friends to take another train with the two youngsters. During the trip Marie slyly asks the deputy of the Gers if he is always receiving anonymous letters.

"Always! And I have received a very odd one just now."

Marie bites her lips so as not to laugh. She could have recited this letter by heart. "Confiding in your

honor as a gentleman, five society ladies venture so far as to ask you to give them a cup of tea in your home. They will be masked and you will give your word of honor to let them depart when and as they wish. Answer in the Sunday *Figaro*." Paul de Cassagnac does not answer. He has more serious preoccupations. January 14 he is one of the principal participants in a ceremony for the repose of the soul of Napoleon III. Marie reads in *Figaro*: "At the moment when Monsieur Paul de Cassagnac descended the steps of the temple most of those present uncovered. Nearly 5,000 persons were there."

Marie, in the name of her mother, writes to the Bonapartist deputy to invite him to dinner the last Saturday in January. He accepts. Friends of Marie, sisters of an English family—the unknown women of the anonymous letter—are present, all in white, like Dina and Marie. There is badinage and teasing. Moussia's famous Diary is mentioned. She must bring out the white box containing the notebooks, each of which bears the title or epigraph: *Gloriae cupiditas*. In playful gallantry, Cassagnac peeps at the contents. "I had to fight to keep him from reading it to me; I got my wrist bands rumpled, my

hands kissed." After the departure of the charming guest, Marie is troubled. Some months ago the girl has begun, with her usual fervor, her artistic apprenticeship at the Atelier Julian. She asks herself if the dawning friendship does not threaten to make her neglect her art. But this prudence vanishes in a night.

More than ever, Moussia and her friends are resolved to continue the pleasantry of the anonymous letter. And now the recipient answers. Is he duped? It is hardly probable. The time is fixed: Sunday, January 27 at eight o'clock. The "unknown women" exact "a perfect tea, Siraudin pralines and Boissier dragées for one of the ladies". On the day indicated, at the hour named, four dominoes with white masks are at the polemicist's door. The host is there, indeed, as also are the Siraudin and Boissier confections. Host and guests are charmed and charming. They visit—with what curiosity!—the mysterious house, which, Marie notes, partakes of the laboratory of Cagliostro and the establishment of the man who makes amorous conquests. The decorative scheme bears the mark of the enthusiast. There is a simple luxury, with the talismans and relics of the knight,

arms, autographs, and portraits of all the Napoleons. Paul de Cassagnac himself figures in his collection of historic images, costumed as a Zouave. Named by the Emperor major of the *garde mobile* of the Gers, Cassagnac had resigned to enlist as a simple Zouave in the Imperial Guard. The four dominoes wrest the photograph from each other. And that gives Paul de Cassagnac occasion to relate how, at Sedan, in the instant of supreme sorrow, he was the last French soldier who saluted Napoleon III with a "*Vive l'Empereur!*" as the vanquished monarch went toward the German lines to attempt, at the price of a personal immolation, to obtain honorable treatment for his army and conditions of peace acceptable to his country.

His voice is charged with emotion; he speaks with the gravity that subdues. Then in an instant the conversation changes tone. A very curious collection has just been discovered, of imprints, or drawings of pretty feminine feet, and Marie becomes absorbed in the collection, thinking to herself that she could enrich this singular documentary treasure with a personal contribution. The host is sparkling. He has the most impertinent way of "regarding women as

little things which amuse". But all is forgiven; he knows how to say nothing with such tender and discreet elegance that each of the women can believe his accents inspired by her alone, and truly there is something in that to turn the head of a young lady masquerading. So, when the Prince Charming abruptly places himself at the feet of one of his guests, Miss Bertha Boyd, she, more perturbed than she has any right to be, raises her mask, thus betraying the identity of all.

"Ah, I was quite certain!" says the host.

Marie is furious, embarrassed, humiliated. The impropriety of her part in this entertainment—we must consider the censoriousness of the epoch—becomes suddenly apparent to her and perturbs her. She retires to a corner of the drawing room, speaks to no one, will permit no one to approach her. Very soon she gives the signal for departure, and returns home, thinking, "I am lost, in the eyes of this man."

"Is it not frightful to have unmasked, my great friend?" she asks him, the following Sunday, when he comes to Madame Bashkirtseff's to dine.

Cassagnac answers without answering, by kissing her hand. He already inspires the girl with such con-

fidence that she treats him "like a woman or a brother." At least she believes so, and yet only half believes, as is proved by her visit, February 14, to Mademoiselle Albertis, a fortune teller with cards, and four days later to the somnambulist Alexis.

To each of them she shows a letter from Paul de Cassagnac. "This man loves you," says the first. "He is thinking of a union with you, but it will never take place." "He has a true affection for you," affirms Alexis, "and very little else."

So now she knows. Let her keep her heart. She has also been consulting her Diary. It is February and February has already been a fateful month three times. In February she lived in her imagination the romance of which the Duke of Hamilton was the hero; in February again she thought she loved the "Cardinalino", then the "Count Bijou". Is she going to be less imprudent this time, will she understand herself better?

Yes and no. It seems that in this innocent adventure, Marie read only very late, too late, the truth written in as yet indistinct letters in her heart. A shock was necessary to bring to definite clarity what was still incertitude and confusion in her and one of

Marie's friends who today is Madame la Générale G—— has told me the trivial incident which caused the simultaneous revelation and rupture.

On the eve of his duel with Monsieur Andrieux, a week after his duel with Monsieur Thomson, Paul de Cassagnac had come to dine and spend the evening at Madame Bashkirtseff's. He found Marie much affected by the disappearance of her dog Pincio, which was not "a stupid lady's-dog", but an intelligent companion, with all the sense a dog can show in his actions and his way of speaking. The polemicist with forced gayety tried to turn the matter into badinage. Marie made such sharp replies that Cassagnac too became sarcastic.

"I fight a duel tomorrow," he says to her, somewhat nervous. "You will please permit me to consider myself your friend. You know my affection for you; I know nothing of your feelings toward me. I may be killed in a few hours and you think only of your dog."

The young girl remained silent, her lips pressed tight together. It never pleased her to deliver her deepest feelings to any confidant other than her Diary.

"Which would you like better, Marie?—to know that I am unhurt, or to learn that Pincio has been found?"

Then the young Russian, slave to the habit of masking her true expression, and too prompt to arm herself against a yielding sensibility, speaks these words which immediately she would wish unsaid:

"Why of course I would rather you were wounded than that my dog were lost."

It was over. The rest of the evening was ghastly.

In vain, Marie, conscious of having wounded a susceptible friend, plied him with reparatory attentions. As she offered essence of violets which she had just received from Nice, he refused, and counseled her to save this perfume for the beloved Pincio when he should be found.

"You are angry?" she asked reproachfully.

"I am disappointed."

"My word of honor! One would believe it was serious."

It was perfectly serious. The following month, Marie noted in her Diary that the break was complete, that the former sympathy had melted like snow. The duel had had no tragic results, had served

only to permit Paul de Cassagnac to assume once more the imprudent and disdainful attitude which entered into the composition of "that magnetism capable of making a hundred thousand women crazy", writes Marie the twenty-first of March. She feels bitter about the rupture, which has taken place without any demonstrative scene, which has been courteous, worldly, but decisive. She cannot bear herself any longer, she detests her hands, her face, her gowns. She regards the absent as the only man worthy of her attention, of her admiration, of her love. On a wrathful impulse, she repeats, without conviction, that only the loss of her dog Pincio saddens her. It does no good. The best of her thought is for the friend whom she has wounded and whom she will never see again. He is, she admits, the only man with whom she can imagine herself happy in every circumstance and whom she always finds again in her dreams. She learns that he is to pass the evening in a home in the Faubourg Saint-Germain where she cannot hope to meet him, and she cries.

And then, the unbearable climax: it is announced to Marie that Paul de Cassagnac has betrothed

himself to a young Polish girl. A Pole? What a blow for the Russian! "Why not to me?" she writes. "I would give all my diamonds and a year of my young life, I would let a finger be cut off my hand, I would make a vow to dress in black a whole year, if I could be in the place of this girl. These sacrifices would be offered in the expectation of being refused, but if I had to make a real sacrifice, I would offer only one, a terrible one: I would give up painting and lie at the feet of my master." Three days later she writes: "If you knew what I have asked of God! I have asked to marry C—— and I have promised to consent to marry him."

The following Thursday (April 25), Paul de Cassagnac returns to dine at Madame Bashkirtseff's. In the course of the evening, Marie takes him away to her little drawing room where, with her cousin Dina, they chat until eleven o'clock. It is intimate, delightful. He is full of fantasy as usual. Marie forgets to be coquettish. Hands frozen, face on fire, she laughs a great deal, laughs all the time, to disguise her melancholy. The brilliant friend lavishes ingenious flatteries upon her and perhaps never has he been so skilful in pleasing. Do they speak of the

coming event of which all are thinking and of which everybody in Parisian society is talking? Decidedly not. Marie has too much fear of the word which might break the charm, for truly this evening, their last together, perhaps, is a delicious ordeal for her. Under the rose shades, the blonde freshness of the two young girls envelops with its irresistible grace the friend who has returned but who is to disappear again, for, in the mirage of this fugitive return, of these studied attentions, of this alms of tenderness, there is the melancholy of a farewell. Marie would like to persuade herself that she scarcely thinks of this "big brother" as a lover. Ah! how she could wish at least to retain the friend. When they separate, Moussia, for the first and only time, bids him farewell "in Russian fashion", kissing him on the forehead.

The weeks pass, the dear guest does not return. He really cannot return. The Diary and the intimate notebooks of Marie have retained, among impudent and irritated witticisms, the accents of a deep and lasting sorrow. There now are only distant salutations, exchanged when the carriages meet. "He marries. I cannot get used to this atrocity!"

In a white purse with Marie's initials on it Monsieur Pierre Borel has discovered a note in which Marie confessed her love, her anger, her grief: ten lines of heartbreak.

But this despairing missive was not sent. In answer to the notification, diplomatic, witty, friendly, which was mailed to her, Marie donned again the poor mask of her whole existence, to write this sportive letter of which the draft was found among her papers:

"You ask me, my friend, how I have received the great news. I greeted it with murmurs. Having placed myself outside of all that makes the life of women, I speak from the height of the mountain, and without that modesty which prevents one from speaking one's thought when one is an interested party.

"What, then, is happening to you? Are you like the cantatrice who retires at the psychological moment when people are still able to say, 'What a pity!'? I like this idea very well; if you did the deed without this major reason, I should see that I had been mistaken in you. I took you for a public monument, for national property. Imagine the Arc

de Triomphe or the Louvre passing into private hands. I would pardon you only in my favor, just as I should find it monstrous if these monuments were given to anybody but me . . . it would be equally bizarre, but excusable in my eyes. I spare you no longer, in my certainty that nothing can prevent the calamity. A man who has inspired so many passions, seduced so many hearts, betrayed so many fidelities, is fated to marry. It is the expiation."

Long after the marriage of Paul de Cassagnac to the charming Mademoiselle Acar, the name of him whom Marie has not forgotten, cannot forget, recurs in melancholy phrases of the Diary: "Evidently, his great force was in the prestige which surrounded him at the time when I knew him. . . . At present, this is gone. But the imprint dates from then. . . ." (February 2, 1881.) "Why, in my stories to go to sleep on, can I not find another hero, why have I not been able to for three years? Then it is really he? Julian asked me if I feel pleasure in seeing him. Of course. Alway? Always." Here is that real love, that "supreme goal" toward which Marie's romantic imagination strives. "I should really like to know whether it is an honorable sentiment or simply the

overabundance of my youth which has need of an object of adoration." (February 1881.) "He is the only man whom I should find it natural to love." (March 25, 1881.) "I have only him in my heart and in my head." (April 4.) She is humiliated to be always obsessed by the memory of this man who perhaps no longer knows that she exists, whom she has known when she was "half-formed in mind, saying stupid things, mad things". When friends, maladroit consolers, inform her that Paul de Cassagnac is perhaps not the hero created by her imagination and is no longer a man of the day, when they repeat to her that his party is crumbling, that his paper no longer sells, that many of his admirers are abandoning him, that his career is virtually finished, that he is not capable of aiding the destiny of an ambitious woman, Marie notes that these descents, these contradictions, these weaknesses, do not prevent love.

Love? Without doubt it is the destiny of this young girl who has been represented, and who indeed represents herself, as free of mind and hard of heart, to love much more—outside the adoring family circle—than she has ever been loved.

"Love," she writes, April 16, 1881, while her thought is still entirely of Cassagnac, "it seems that one falls ill and dies of it."

Let us not say that Marie died of love. But let us not deny that she truly loved in this instance. Certainly she will not permit herself to be prostrated by her disappointment, she who will never resign herself to inactivity when stricken by disease. In the days following the rupture with Paul de Cassagnac, she feels the need of a change of air. She goes to Dieppe. She detests the shore, it makes her ill, and she is enormously bored for a week. We see her play a mad and childish prank. In the corridor of the hotel, she fills with water the boots of a Brazilian, whom she thus obliges to remain in his room until eleven o'clock and to breakfast in his slippers. But, more seriously, she forces her mind to consider new projects of marriage. A frightful nabob, possessed of twenty million, is presented to her. "A monster? Never!" Marie seems to become fleetingly interested in one of the frequent visitors to her home, the young prince Soutzo, whose ancestors have reigned in Moldavia and Wallachia. Soutzo is very much smitten with Moussia and his

daily visits in 1880 give umbrage to the Karageorgevitches, Bojidar especially. But Marie does not take very seriously this descendent of the hospodars of the Danube, who soon leaves Paris and goes to solicit a rank in the Hellenic army.

Perhaps she thought of marrying Joseph Arnaud de l'Ariège, the fashionable and wealthy government secretary. Her unfortunate sentimental adventure with Paul de Cassagnac has disgusted Marie with Bonapartism. She has always felt herself, she affirms, a realist in art, a republican in politics. She makes this pert witticism: "I am really a royalist only when putting myself in the place of the king." And she adds: "If I had been born before the Revolution I would have been a revolutionist heart and soul." She admires Gambetta passionately, and the far from romantic liking she has for his colleague Joseph Arnaud is without doubt a reflection of this admiration. The project of union flits through her mind but does not become fixed. Without doubt, at this moment Marie has a clear idea of her situation. The serious claimants are too prudent. They hesitate to ask the hand of a young girl who is pretty, rich, brilliant, but who is said to be ill, who has had to

be taken to a health resort city every year of her life, without being cured. Marie decides that the best thing for her will be to marry in Russia. She is taken there in 1882, a year before the death of her father. She meets country neighbors, two young princes, one likeable, without great personality; the other, a brutal savage who maltreats his coachman with fists and spurs. It is not these Russians who will make her forget the Frenchman, the orator, the polemicist, the knight, the only man whose violence she has found lovable. Other candidates who offer themselves revolt her by their mediocrity. She wishes to think of marriage no more. She becomes absorbed in her dream of a great destiny as an artist. And now this varied physiognomy appears to us in another essential aspect.

For the life of Marie Bashkirtseff is made of many lives, and each time we try to isolate one of these existences, it is as if we began a new story.

CHAPTER IV

The Moth and the Flame

ATELIER JULIAN

THE morning of October 3, 1877, a nude male model was posing before the women students of the Atelier Julian, when a sensational entrance caused pencils to drop and heads to turn. A girl appeared at the end of the room, in a long sable coat, an unheard-of luxury to this little world of artists, of which not one member was wealthy. The face was so fair, so round, so rosy, so childish under the fur toque that sympathetic smiles greeted the vision.

The prevailing sentiment was extreme curiosity. A rich coat was almost a scandal in this work room in the Passage des Panoramas to which one ascended by a black, smoky, rickety stair, and where, when the weather began to be the least bit warm, one roasted under the leads. But worse yet—the girl was accompanied by a negro boy in livery who

carried the easel and the paint box. A negro, my dear! You may decide whether the young lady with her baggage and her retinue took immediate rank as a phenomenon.

However, the master of the place, Julian, brusque and cordial, introduced:

"Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff, who comes to work with us!"

Bashkirtseff? The name, harshly sonorous, difficult to pronounce, was very novel, very strange to this hard-working group which counted so few Parisian girls.

Frenchwomen, at that time, rarely attended painting schools, because the obligation to draw nude figures shocked the bourgeois families. Only a little later, after Marie had set the example, did Mademoiselle de Villevieille, Mademoiselle Madeleine del Sarte, Mademoiselle d'Andlau, Mademoiselle Canrobert, appear in "Julian's shop", as it was called by the future artists who for the most part were foreigners, Swedish, Swiss, Spanish, Italian. Almost all the pupils of 1877 lived very humbly and respectably. In the little studio this autumn morning the new comrade, in her queenly fur, and

L'ATELIER JULIAN

where Marie Bashkirtseff studied art. She is the figure in black in the lower right corner. (From a painting by Marie Bashkirtseff.)

with her black servant, made on the twelve young women who had just interrupted their study of a nude male figure a vivid impression which was to last. One of the students particularly, Mademoiselle Louise-Catherine Breslau, who had come to Paris from Zurich, to serve the apprenticeship to her splendid career as a painter, was impressed by the newcomer's "artistic appearance". "I can still see her come in," she told me. "I thought at once that she would be very amusing to paint: blonde hair, of a very beautiful ash blonde, with glints of gold, a blonde that one never finds in France, hair truly splendid, which, unfastened, must have enveloped her body as far as her thighs. The head somewhat Kalmuk, with gray-blue eyes sufficiently dark, a very pretty dimple in the cheek, a childish air. Taking off her fur, Marie Bashkirtseff was seen to be wearing a simple work dress of very fine black texture with a Robespierre collar. She had also a girdle of crocodile skin which to us seemed at least as extraordinary as the fur and the negro."

I have named Mademoiselle Breslau, whose personality assumes a dominant importance in a whole section of Marie's Diary. Under the date of Septem-

ber 21, 1878, we read, "Breslau will be a great painter, a truly great painter." And again, "Breslau is the only one I respect. I am a child in art and she is a woman. I am glad to have found a rival worthy of me." "Breslau has painted a woman's cheek so natural and so true, that I, a woman, an artist, a rival, had a desire to kiss it." Finally, "The little I learn is from Breslau. That famous *will* of Breslau's! I try to call up similar qualities in myself and I believe great efforts must be made to obtain the results which I thought fell from heaven. This girl is a force; she is not the only one, I admit; but we come from the same cage, not to say from the same nest, and I have divined and foreseen her. I despise myself, I deny myself, I am nothing. Beside Breslau, I seem to myself a cardboard box, frail and brittle, beside a chest of massive oak richly sculptured."

This is praise indeed, worth many official eulogies. Marie has admired her comrade Breslau, has envied her, loved and detested her with that complex fervor which is aroused in one by the success of a rival, not because one is basely jealous, but because the rival's success makes one more aware of one's own distance from the goal. One is vexed not with the other but

with oneself. The continuous, progressive successes of Louise Breslau in the competitions of the Atelier Julian at first, and then at the Salon, have exasperated Marie, for they make her own road seem longer, and she is in such haste to traverse it, is so frequently brought to a halt by the state of her health! But never does she speak a word to depreciate the talent of her companion, even after they have had a spectacular quarrel, which does not prevent them from working on side by side. All the part of Marie's Diary in which the Atelier Julian is evoked is a glorification of the effort of Mademoiselle Breslau, and this testimony of the dead girl will assure to her who was the object of it the deferent sympathy of the public, already well aware of the artistic honors she has justly won.

Mademoiselle Louise-Catherine Breslau is one of the best informed of the surviving friends of Marie and one of the most representative of the epoch in which the brief life was consumed. She lives simply in her little house in Neuilly, in her charming studio where she is visited by faithful admirers, eminent friends. I have very recently heard Albert Besnard, Arsène Alexandre, Charles Saunier, express

their own profound respect for this fine example of a mature feminine talent.

Naturally when I was collecting the material for this book I requested Mademoiselle Breslau to grant me interviews which I deemed indispensable. I informed her that I would ask her for her memories of her former companion and rival, who was not sparing in eulogies of her but who not often could refrain from darting an angry shaft at her. Mademoiselle Breslau answered me in these noble lines: "I am always deeply moved on rereading this Diary which speaks to me so eloquently, so sincerely, of a period very distant, alas! when, with all the ardor of our twenty years, we flung our young lives, without reserve, into that forever unrealizable dream which is art. Come, monsieur, together we will talk of my poor old comrade, Marie Bashkirtseff."

Mademoiselle Breslau had arrived in Paris in May 1877. She began to follow the courses of the Atelier Julian the next month. Her health was not good, but she had an iron will and the ardor and patience which accomplish. Without friends in Paris, she had brought a commendatory letter to the Swiss legation, where she was welcomed with great benev-

olence by the minister, Monsieur Kern, and his wife, a lovable elderly couple. Monsieur Kern had been the only member of the diplomatic corps to remain at his post in 1870. Madame was like an old lady from Dickens with the rolled curls of the 1830's. The Kerns were an invaluable moral aid for their young compatriot.

Mademoiselle Breslau lodged with one of her comrades, Mademoiselle Schœppi, in a modest family *pension*, at number 27 Avenue de la Grande-Armée. Both went every morning to the Atelier Julian, which was then bare and devoid of all comfort, but which they found admirable: "One could work; there was nothing to limit one."

Julian was a big pale man, with a Marseillais accent which twenty years of Paris had not been able to efface completely. He had a black, pointed beard and a shrewd, genial eye. The pupils said that he had had considerable success as an amateur wrestler, and called him "the masked marvel". He belonged to an agricultural family of the south of France. Very much the business man, very shrewd, a painter of the second order, but a good guide, with judgment and dignity, representing "the right-thinking major-

ity" as Marie was later to say of him, he had organized these painting schools for men, and then for women, which were at once successful and which survived their founder. Julian, in 1870, had secured the services as joint-instructor of Tony Robert-Fleury, who had just received the medal of honor at the Salon for "The Last Day of Corinth". An excellent master, very handsome, very dark, very cold, very tall, the man of forty in 1877 seemed scarce thirty-five, and all his pupils were in love with his "beautiful tired face."

Marie quickly acclimated herself to the atmosphere of the studio. Her first attempts had persuaded Julian and Tony Robert-Fleury that she was a serious pupil and by no means a mere society girl making pencil sketches as a fad. She reproached herself for the time which she had lost, and was vexed to think that she might have begun her apprenticeship when she was thirteen. We must understand that Marie is beginning to carry out the fixed program which is to realize her personality and raise her into the domain to which her tastes, and, she believes, her aptitudes, call her. What she wishes is to become not an estimable but an admirable painter. She

requires the eminence of Tony Robert-Fleury, of Boulanger, of Jules Lefebvre, who compose the jury for the contests of the Atelier Julian. She wishes better still, if possible: the celebrity more acclaimed because more disputed, more personal, more popular, of Jules Bastien-Lepage, whose realism is a tumultuous revelation and a happy scandal. Thus one comprehends the delirious hopes, the excessive disappointments noted in the Diary, the Saturdays on which Tony Robert-Fleury examines the work of his pupils: "While he was slowly coming nearer my place, I was reciting prayers with a fervor which Heaven appreciated, for he found my work satisfactory. . . . Tony and Julian seem so insignificant compared with the tremendous effect which their words can have on me! If Julian had not reassured me a bit as to the composition, I should have rolled on the floor in despair. Every Saturday costs me dear, emotionally!" "What makes me think I shall do better than my comrades is that while feeling their merits I cannot content myself with doing as they do." She would like to go three times as fast as everybody else. She is enraged at not being the best at the end of a few weeks! "This diligence is

not human," she is told. "You have given up society, riding, everything." After five months, Julian declares that he has never seen anybody make such progress in so little time. "You already have all those things which cannot be learned," Tony Robert-Fleury tells her. She notes: "Robert-Fleury and Julian groom me like a horse which may win the great prize." Yes, perhaps, but not Marie alone. There is also Breslau, who takes the lead.

The two girls had formed an attachment at once. Each recognized the value of the other, and their eagerness to secure the best places before the model imposed on them, in the studio, a constant proximity in which they offered a vivid contrast of appearance: Louise Breslau thin, boyish, of somewhat sickly aspect, with an expression animated by a discreet zeal; Marie all radiant light in complexion, eyes and hair, very womanly, very girlish, very much the spoiled child, fastidiously elegant even in her most simple adornments, incorrigibly playful, making sharp remarks, setting the school by the ears, lavishing favors with some coquetry, some care to be winning as well as obliging, to exercise that charm which she delighted to try out on this terrain as on all others.

The pupils knew that in her family she was called Moussia. Naturally, prettily, they had made "Moussia" into "Mousse". "At Julian's," Marie noted, "one is no longer the daughter of one's mother, one is oneself; one has art before one and nothing else. One feels so content, so free, so proud. . . ." Her companions like to watch her draw or paint. She has a fine, interesting hand, not absolutely feminine, but thin, sinewy, like that of a young boy, with the fingers somewhat spoiled by playing stringed instruments and by her childish habit of biting her nails. Louise Breslau tells her that there is beauty in the way her hand touches an object, though her hands are not classically beautiful.

Every morning Louise Breslau—who in October 1877 had won the silver medal in the drawing contest of the school—and her friend Mademoiselle Schœppi walked from their lodging in the Avenue de la Grande-Armée as far as the Avenue de l'Alma, where they got Moussia, who took her comrades to the Passage des Panoramas in her coupé.

It was in this period of good feeling that Moussia indulged in one of her caprices which Mademoiselle Breslau remembers with great amusement. Marie

spoke very often to the two Swiss of Paul de Cassagnac with whom she was tenderly obsessed. She informed them how she had visited the apartment of the Bonapartist deputy with friends and had beheld there a collection of prints of beautiful feminine feet, those of the famous Castiglione among them. That the collection might be enriched with a specimen of value, Marie conceived the quaint idea of having a tiny tablet painted representing her very pretty bare feet crushing a bouquet of Parma violets to signify that she trampled Cassagnac's Bonapartism under foot, the humor of the gift excusing its audacity. "I am going to write to Carolus Duran," she told the two girls. "But what will he charge me for painting that?" She wrote the letter, signing the names and giving the address of Louise Breslau and Sophie Schœppi. Two days after Marie sent the note to Carolus, the landlady of the *pension* marched the two Swiss girls into the parlor to tell them something very serious: Monsieur Carolus Duran had been there in the afternoon. He had questioned the good woman about the wild young girls who had been so impudent as to write to him and ask him to paint their feet. He seemed in high dudgeon.

"For heaven's sake!"

The Swiss girls are furious. "We'll give it to Mousse for this." And the next day the ride from the Avenue de l'Alma to the Atelier Julian is rather lively:

"Well, Mousse! you have a queer sense of humor——"

And Breslau and Schœppi narrate the incident at the same time, not without temper.

"What?" says Marie, with a burst of laughter. "Carolus came to your house? But I told him to answer by letter."

"Well," says Schœppi, "I am going to write to Carolus and give him your address."

"Oh, my little Schœppi, don't do that! What an uproar it would cause at home. I'll tell you. You shall paint my feet."

Sophie Schœppi, thus indemnified, executed the curious commission and also made a portrait of Marie. During one of the settings, she was struck by a remarkable example of maternal adoration. Marie was sitting on a high stool. Madame Bashkirtseff, coming in during the pose, kissed her daughter's shoulder, then her bare feet, with a sort

of religious fervor. Mademoiselle Breslau was unable to tell me whether her friend's work had been sent to Paul de Cassagnac for his singular collection.

Marie had visited the modest quarters of Mesdemoiselles Breslau and Schœppi in their *pension* of the Avenue de la Grande-Armée: "Perfectly artistic garrets, of a cleanliness which almost gives them an air of opulence." The little Russian, accustomed to scenes of luxury peopled by mediocrity, marvels to find in a humble environment an intellectual atmosphere "which makes you feel good". Breslau is extremely interesting, Schœppi quaint, original, and charmingly ingenuous. "I thought such creatures did not exist. It would never occur to her that a person she likes might wear false hair and use powder." Another member of the little group of budding artists staying at the *pension* is Sara Purser, painter and philosopher. With her one has discussions which make one reflect, about Kantism, about life, about the ego, and about death. December 25, 1877, these girls invite Marie to a Christmas-tree party. They tell fortunes: Louise Breslau will receive laurels, Marie the Prix de Rome, the others will have disappointments.

Monday morning at Julian's one chose one's place before the model for the whole week. So that day the Swiss girls and the Russian arrived first in the Passage des Panoramas. The pupils lunched in the studio. The servant of the "shop", Marie, "the typical concierge", with red cheeks, fat face, and lively tongue, who said that "having always been with artists she was no longer a bourgeoise", brought the pupils the very simple repast which they had ordered from her. Of course for Moussia it was another matter. At the stroke of twelve, the negro Chocolate or a footman made an imposing entrance, bearing a great hamper prepared, with their usual imperious and tactless solicitude, by Marie's "two mothers". There was an unloading of cold chicken, pastries, fruits, cakes of all sorts, which the girl shared generously with those around her. This bounty was greatly appreciated by many of the pupils whose only luxury was to add to their frugal repast a cup of hot coffee.

I have not the documentary zeal to give here a complete list of the young women who attended the Atelier Julian in Marie's time. The *massière* was Mademoiselle Amélie Beaury-Saurel, of Spanish

origin, who was later to marry Rodolphe Julian and continue his work. Here and there foreign names appear in the Diary or in Marie's correspondence: Zilhardt, Wick, Bang, Nordlander, Forchammer; Mademoiselle Klumpke who inherited some of the property of Rosa Bonheur; Mademoiselle Terka Jablonowska, the future Madame Maurice Bernhardt; Mademoiselle Theuriet; and we must not forget Lisen the slim Swede, and Amanda the stout Swede. There are others who are not named in the Diary but are picturesquely identified: "the one who produces crazy canvases, swollen heads, cross eyes," "the one whom it would be imprudent to marry, because everything she does is out of joint."

The Diary is filled with joys, quarrels, rivalries of the studio, the "Folies-Julian", as Marie says in times of gayety. One autumn day in 1880 Moussia places a guitarist, a negress, on the model throne and has her sing for an hour. There is a contest, almost a duel between Marie and Mademoiselle Beaury-Saurel, to whom Julian assigns the same subject, a view of the studio with three figures.

At this time, Marie Bashkirtseff and Louise Breslau had already broken off their friendly relation.

There had been nothing very grave. Moussia, the spoiled child, had let loose a flood of fantastic vituperation which had made a trivial matter assume an exaggerated importance. One Monday in June, 1879, Louise Breslau had been the first to arrive in the studio, Marie following soon after. They were alone with the model.

"Good morning, Louise!"

"Good morning, Mousse!"

The pupils had the bad habit of hanging up their palettes somewhat haphazard, often one on top of the other on the same nail. Taking up her working implements, Marie had not noticed that a good deal of wet paint had come off the top of another palette onto the underside of her own. Very pretty, in one of those thin black dresses which became her so well, she had just started to work when she let out a cry of horror. The palette, with colors on both sides, had spotted her left sleeve frightfully. Great wrath.

"What idiot has gone and done that!"

Then followed a philippic, directed at the school in general. Louise Breslau thought it was meant for her. She made a sharp reply, which did not appease the excited Mousse, and they solemnly vowed, in

front of the assembled pupils, never to speak to each other again.

From that time Marie and Louise worked away, often side by side, silently but without hatred, with that emulation which is always fecund. "We struck the same notes," Mademoiselle Breslau said to me. They do not speak to each other any more, but they do not dislike each other. One day Marie sends a comrade to Louise with an orange. Louise accepts the gift. Another time, in May 1880, Louise Breslau has someone ask Marie for permission to use her model. "I generously consented, and we present to the closely watching school the touching spectacle of our friendly emulation side by side." In October of this same year the school, which was prospering indeed, had to be divided. A larger establishment was opened in the rue Vivienne, which received twenty-two pupils. Eight, Marie among them, remained in the Passage des Panoramas. Then came new pupils and the young Russian formed new attachments: Miss Alice Brisbane, the delightful little American who is often mentioned in the Diary, a willing model, a pleasant companion for the races and expositions; Mademoiselle de Villevieille, warmly wel-

comed by Moussia's family; especially Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert, a keen-minded adolescent with a great deal of charm, who is brought to school every morning by her governess and whose friendship, highly beneficial to Marie during her life, has been of loyal service since Marie's death.

A GREAT LIGHT YONDER

"*ART!* I think of it as a great light, yonder, very distant, and I forget all else and walk with my eyes fixed on this light. Now, oh! no, no, now, my God, do not frighten me! Something horrible tells me that . . . Ah, no! I will not write it, I do not wish to bring calamity upon myself!"

These words call up the fascinating image: the moth and the flame. Indeed "The Moth" was used as a title for a play in which many persons thought they saw an incarnation of Marie Bashkirtseff, travestied, denatured, outraged. Henry Bataille has disclaimed any intention of dramatizing the young Russian. His letter to the public appeased a great deal of indignation. If we can dissociate the word from disagreeable controversy, rid it of a false theat-

rical value, the symbol of the moth, frail, winged, which burns itself in a rapture and an illusion, will resume its true dramatic meaning when we follow Marie Bashkirtseff's suicidal effort to realize her dream of a great artistic destiny.

I ask forbearance, for I must speak almost simultaneously of achievement and destruction, place on the same plane the strength and the frailty which are our human condition. I should have liked, for the sake of an orderly narrative and a logical sequence of the images which it calls up, to be able to separate the lights from the shadows. But all mingles under my pen just as it is presented to my mind. I am incapable of seeing in this furious liver of life anything but the creature stricken to death.

In the studio no one suspected that she was suffering from a mortal malady. Undoubtedly the strange huskiness of her voice, its abrupt, intermittent clarity, had been noticed immediately, as had the hardness of hearing, slight at first but increasing rapidly, which was a painful humiliation for the girl. But who could have supposed that this extremely lively creature was an invalid? "This morning," she writes, October 26, 1878, "as Robert-

Fleury was speaking to me, I listened to him like a baby, ingenuous, my cheeks changing color, my hands fidgeting; he could not keep from smiling as he spoke, nor could I, for I was thinking that I smelled of fresh violets, that my hair naturally wavy, crisp, and fine, had delightful lights in it, and that my hands, holding I know not what, were in amusing poses." This aspect of "amusing baby" has nothing very tragic about it. But we know that the appearance of the short-lived can be deceptively bright and gay. Only the Diary can give us the true idea of the duality: the girl rich with ardor in the workroom of her apprenticeship and overwhelmed with dread in the secrecy of her solitude, in the refuge of her "desert".

The summers of 1877 and 1878, Doctor Fauvel, who attends Marie, has contented himself with having her take cures for her chest and throat at Enghien and Soden, where, the Diary says, "consumptives are sent". The implication passes unperceived. Marie herself is less attentive to these warnings of an insidious disease than to the difficulties of an apprenticeship which she wants to be as short as possible. In November 1879, the impatient girl has

the doubt that she is not so well endowed for painting as for drawing. Louise Breslau gets far ahead, and to console herself, to reassure herself, Marie makes calculations and repeats to herself that her comrade had begun to work seriously, methodically, a long time before she had. In this same year Breslau exhibits at the Salon, the first of the class to do so. Her picture, a portrait of a young girl, for which a friend of hers has posed, is greatly admired by the public, and much lauded by Marie. Remarkable début, which gives Moussia an incentive to prepare something of her own for the Salon of the following year, when she exhibits a "Woman Reading", a young woman in a light blue negligée, bent over a book beside which is a bouquet of violets; a burst of light on very beautiful blonde hair—Dina's—which falls down the back, half braided. The picture was sent under a pseudonym. Accepted, it did not displease. It did not make a sensation. Nevertheless, it was not mediocre, and it showed a great deal of promise.

Let us realize the importance of this date, May 1880. Marie, after unsparing toil, has made her first contact with the public. She is nineteen. She feels

strongly that she is at the beginning of her labors. Already she indicates her artistic personality. She manifests an instinctive disdain for imitation, romance, pretension. She seeks absolute veracity in simplicity. In her painting her masters recognize qualities of harmony, vigor, frankness. Indeed Julian sometimes scolds her violently for being too "modern".

No matter. She has ceased to be an apprentice. And now the great light yonder, fascinating her, and she rises toward it. At once she falls back, panting, burning with fever. The first fall, the first torture of the moth whose wings have brushed against the flame. Marie must be carried away at once from the peril of death, far from Paris. We see her at Mont-Dore, rebellious, dissatisfied with the lodging, with the table, the regimen, incapable of resigning herself to rest, working in the damp air in a lawn dress, trying to paint landscapes, and ending by stamping her foot on the canvas. "How can one prefer anything in the world to the figure?"

She rides horseback five hours at a stretch, ascends the Sancy, and during the climb she suffers in her chest so terribly that she could scream. She is in-

capable of sleeping, even of reading. She returns to Paris, ill, at the end of August, and rents a garden in Passy, rue du Ranelagh, where she undertakes to paint a beautiful girl, Irma, nude under a tree. Every night Marie returns home exhausted. Doctor Fauvel gives her an auscultation and is alarmed. It is grave. He prescribes "consumptive medicine", counsels her to go to Doctor Sée or Doctor Potain, or to bring both of them to him for a consultation. The whole household is agitated. Whatever is necessary will be done. Marie is overwhelmed, but only because she has been told that she will never hear so well as formerly. This half-infirmity subdues her cruelly. As for the rest, she "triumphs". For a long time she had thought herself menaced by something hideous. Five years ago, at Nice, she had felt sometimes a curious pain under her right shoulder blade. She had then the odd conviction that a hump was going to grow there, two of her father's sisters being hunchbacks. Two years afterward in Germany, a doctor at one of the baths had spoken of a doubtful spot in the right lung. Now everything is definite. "It all reduces itself to a matter of dying in a few years, a miserable, lingering death. . . . And one

becomes so thin, so ugly." Will she defend herself, at least?

The physician who is treating her orders a stay in the south until the month of March. Marie refuses decisively. Leave Paris, the school, the work she has begun? Is he joking, this Doctor Potain? Marie forces a wan gayety and declares that she has ruptured her lung in one of her rages at the petty circumstances of her environment.

Let her laugh, let her make sharp remarks. As yet there has been nothing alarming in the progression of her malady, nothing decisive in her artistic apprenticeship. Now there is an abrupt change, henceforth her life is reduced to the struggle between pain and an artistic expression which truly finds itself. A cruel attack obliges her to interrupt her course at Julian's and go south. She chooses Spain. In Spain she has the revelation of her true artistic mission, for which her admiration for the outdooor work of Jules Bastien-Lepage has prepared her.

This sick child has been working ten hours a day, living at a furious pace when not bent over her easel or her books. She has been seen everywhere, at social gatherings, at the Opera, and even—but very rarely

—at the meetings of the "Women's Rights Club", of which "Citizeness" Hubertine Auclerc is the moving spirit. Has Marie a leaning toward feminism? Yes and no. The emancipation movement seems worth joining, but not as an active member. Marie is not one of the fervent champions, and she certainly does not draw an over-favorable picture of these meetings at Hubertine's, which she attends in disguise, wearing a black wig and under an assumed name. "The desk, with a lamp on it, at the left; at the right the mantelpiece with a bust of the Republic, and in the middle, turning its back to the window, which faces the door, a table covered with papers and ornamented with a candle, with a bell, and with a president who looks very dirty and very stupid. At the left of the president is Hubertine, who lowers her eyes whenever she speaks, and rubs her hands all the time. At the right a withered old socialist fanatic who howls that when the time comes to strike a blow, she will be the first to strike it. A lot of women who look like dissipated concierges, and a few trashy men; some of these fellows with long hair and impossible hats who can't get anyone to listen to them in the cafés. The men have yapped about socialism, collectivism, and

the treacheries of the most liberal deputies. The red in the corner has declared war on religion; Madame de D—— (Norskott) has protested piously and made an idiotic speech with the best of intentions. As a matter of fact, Hubertine is very sensible. She understands that it is not a question of proletariat and idle rich, but of women in general, who demand their rights. She tries to keep them on this terrain. Instead, there are disputes about political subtleties. We are enrolled, we have voted, paid. Enough." And that will be all.

Marie is not going in for politics again. Art, henceforth, will suffice. It will more than suffice to take from her all the health and strength she has.

At Julian's she covers her head with a monk's cowl to avoid draughts. She coughs very hard, breathes with difficulty. "I believe," she says, "that this is called a laryngeal phthisis." She amuses herself drawing a little blond woman, the school model, astride of a chair, smoking and looking at the skeleton, between whose teeth somebody has forced a pipe. Indifference? Defiance? We do not know. But we shall find these strange words in the Diary: "A skeleton is in me, also. We all end that way. Hor-

rible nothingness! All the same I will march on, my eyes closed and my hands extended like one ready to be engulfed."

The family, however, laments. The maid Rosalie, in accordance with the counsels of a fortune teller, has hidden a pot of tar in the girl's apartment. Marie, obsessed by the care with which she is surrounded, exasperated to see her aunt and her cousin Dina sleeping behind her door to spy on her cough, her fever, her insomnia, goes into an invalid's rage, pours a pail of water under her bed, breaks a window pane, leans out the window in the glacial air, and goes to sleep on a divan in her work room. She has no voice, "not even enough to talk with". Thus she drags along until the Salon of May 1881, in which she exhibits a picture with many figures, "The Painting School", the subject assigned by Julian, her companions serving as models. Success of curiosity, and social felicitations, nothing more.

At the end of the same month, Marie goes to Russia, regretfully, against her will, not daring to disobey a wish expressed by her father. She can hardly stand up when she leaves, and her aunt weeps, fearing never to see her again. At Kieff they go to the

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF
At the age of twenty.

Monastery of the Lavra whose catacombs are crowded with pilgrims, kneeling, candle in hand, before the bodies of the saints preserved intact. All the family has come here, hoping that a miracle will restore Marie's health. At Marie's side are her mother, cousin Dina, and even the intermittent father, kneeling in prayer.

Madame Bashkirtseff attributes a great deal more importance to the power of relics and candles than to the orders of the doctors. Marie herself, if she does not believe that God will cure her at once in a church, hopes, nevertheless, that heaven will take pity on her and direct her to a doctor who, with the aid of time, will perhaps save her. Tragic irony. On coming out of the catacombs, Marie, whose right lung only had been affected hitherto, feels for the first time a sharp pain in her left side, "between the collar bone and the breast, where the doctors tap". As soon as she has returned to Paris the doctors are aware of the progress of the disease. They order a stay in the South. Julian himself has intervened with his friendly brusquerie. He frightens his little pupil to make her decide to take care of herself. "Julian is right. Can you see me weak, fleshless, dying, dead?"

Marie consents to spend the autumn away from the school. To what part of the south shall she go? Why not to Spain?

THE SPELL OF SPAIN

THIS trip to Spain, decisive for the development of the artist's personality, has been described by Marie in ardent and humorous pages. She has a marvelous recovery of enthusiasm, vigor, animal spirits. In her notes and in her letters of this time Moussia is a hoyden, a painter, a writer. She reveals the splendor of her gifts, heightened by her laughing charm. She does not go alone. Her aunt, her good aunt, her incomparable aunt, accompanies her. The personality of the lady is indispensable here as an element of contrast. Madame Romanoff has three passions: Marie, roulette, and cigars. Marie first, of course, who, for the aunt, represents heaven on earth, a delightfully disturbing heaven, charged with electricity, shaken by storms—and who becomes so frail every year that one expects to see her shattered like a mirror.

Madame Romanoff is not an artist. In painting

she knows only the paintings of Marie. In the absence of the mother, detained in Russia by the affairs of the family, she is entrusted with the alarming responsibility of conducting the delicate and imperious creature about uncomfortable Spain. So she plays the grumbling policeman, the intrusive nurse, the importunate quencher of the dear child's enthusiasms. Moussia gives an idea of this "picturesque trip to Spain" with her aunt in these familiar and humorous lines which she writes to Julian from Seville:

"*Burgos.* 'What can be here? Only a cathedral? You would have to be English to—And how cold! A dog's country. How nice it is at Biarritz. Why did we leave?' First pail of cold water.

"*Valladolid.* We do not stop. I was too disgusted, having been asked twenty times what this city was and why I wanted to stop *again.*

"*Madrid.* A capital at least, and the weather is fine. Still, the sunset. . . . But the museum is heated, I believe. Makes no difference. 'Quick, quick, let's go to Seville, where there is good cow's milk and roast chickens as Marie likes them, and then the climate there is very healthful.' Do you

see my dreams of Andalusia reduced to chest poultices?

"Finally, leave for Seville, stop at Cordova, where aloes and cactus grow, and where it is hot. Delicious country. But she groans because there isn't any carriage, because there is a walk of ten meters and the visit to the Mosque will exhaust me. Complaints in the third person. . . . 'There is nothing to see, the guide makes it all up on purpose so that we shall miss the train.'

"*Seville*. We go to take the air of the country, to orient ourselves, but we must not leave the main streets, because one is sheltered there; the picturesque quarters, the ill-paved streets with forever recurring squares and gardens, 'are horrible'. 'There is a breeze blowing here! The coachman does it *purposely!* Have we by any chance' (disdainfully) 'come here to visit the suburbs of Seville?'

"I pray heaven to make me indifferent to these blasphemies, but I find myself at the end of my patience. This determination to think of nothing but my health is driving me mad. At Madrid we escaped from it a bit, thanks to the museum and to friends. But on excursions, in the carriage, we are forced to

remain together, and then it is either an insinuating propaganda for my good, or a silence heavy as lead. But I am weary as a walker who has to drag his companions along when they are sleepy and cross. I'll tell you, go to the Salon with the mamma of one of your pupils; I don't specify, take your choice. Well! amplify, amplify, amplify, substitute for the brief torture of the Salon an artistic trip (or irony!) through picturesque Spain, and you will have a dim idea. . . . My fancy would soar if I were alone, but after I have had to resist and resist, to make the greatest efforts in preserving a certain morale, the wings fall and serve only to sweep away the artistic projects and illusions reduced to dust under the hygienic pressure of those who love me."

Although she tells herself that sometime, not with any member of the family, but with "equals", she must revisit Toledo, Burgos, Madrid, Cordova, Seville, Granada, those cities "the mere pronunciation of whose names confers a nobility", Marie will not have wasted her time on this wretched trip. No matter if good lady Romanoff is exasperating with her unfortunate airs, her morbid questions and her affectation of believing herself in a land to which no

one ever goes. Marie, fresh and pretty again, in "her little dresses of white wool, her cloth shoes bought here, and her light hats of a happy woman", traverses the museums, the churches, the streets, in a sort of rapture. Her conceptions of art are transformed. Her mind is permeated with romanticism. In the sanctuaries she admires the colorful contrast of the guides in rags and the sacristans in velvet. She would like, on coming out of a chapel, to meet suddenly, behind a pillar, "the idol of her soul". Her imagination runs riot at the Escurial, where her aunt, whom this visit fatigues and bores, makes every effort and excuse to get away.

At Madrid she is dazzled by the light of Velasquez, "who executes as would a poet and feels as would a man of intellect", and she receives a shock from the brutal painting of Ribera: "But these are the real naturalists! And one dare not speak of the pallid things of Raphael and the meager paintings of the French School!" She mingles, with a sort of intoxication, in the seething life of the proletariat, into which she drags her exasperated aunt. She absolutely must visit the prison of Granada, and she cannot resist the desire to paint a convict who is pre-

paring to do some knitting, while a semicircle of infamous tatterdemalions forms about her, very well-behaved, "hands joined". Now she is in a camp of gypsies, ecstatic. "Her eyes dart about in all directions. Everything makes a picture." She witnesses *corridas* in disgust. But there is color, astounding color, and an indescribable intoxication. "For very little one would stick iron points into everybody's neck. I cut up my melon at the table as if I were planting a banderilla." It is the joyousness of first youth, of complete health. Would one believe that this little traveler having the time of her life was the suppliant prostrated, three months before, in the reliquary crypt of a monastery of Kieff asking the intercession of the saints that God might permit her to live?

But above all, she returns to Paris with a new vision of her art. "Color! To feel color and not reproduce it, is impossible. I see what I did not see; my eyes open; I rise on tiptoe, and do not breathe, for fear that the enchantment will cease, for it is a veritable enchantment. I hope finally to achieve my dreams; I think I understand what must be done. Flesh, all that sings. . . . "

Later, she will note again: "I want it to have skin and to live."

AIR! AIR!

SPAIN has given the impulse. The work of Jules Bastien-Lepage, immediate, more easily assimilable and now better understood, indicates the means of execution.

The picture of the young master of Damvillers: "The Haymakers," had been the most discussed and perhaps most admired painting in the Salon of 1878; open air, bright light, a revel of pearly tones, hay half dried and clover in bloom in the sun, a very pale yellow woven with silver, animated by the vigorous spotting of the clumps of trees which border the brook and the prairie, and, in bold relief against the hay, a young peasant girl sitting, broken with fatigue, her arms dangling, her face red, her eyes staring into vacancy; behind her, flat on his back, her companion sleeping with his fists clenched.

The art of Bastien-Lepage had already moved Marie Bashkirtseff to exclaim: "It is a window open on nature. . . . There is my true path. I wish to

paint like Bastien-Lepage. To the devil with Julian, to the devil with Tony Robert-Fleury! Open wide my windows. Air! Air! I want air! Bastien-Lepage is my God!"

She wishes this masterpiece "The Haymakers" were not too dear for her—35,000 francs was asked for it then—so she could have it in her room, kneel before it at night and see it before her on waking, as if she were still in dream. She has the same exaltation later in the presence of "Women Digging Potatoes". And "Joan of Arc Listening to her Voices", in which the artist attempts an obsessing conciliation of realism and mystery, "a figure simple, true, sublime," produces in Moussia an emotion so strong that she has to restrain herself forcibly from weeping. She has the same ardent emotion—though she has some intelligent objections—before "The Beggar", "Père Jacques", "Village Love", "The Forge". "Can you prefer an 'Execution of Jane Gray' or a 'Bajazet' to the limpid eye of a living girl?" "To copy nature truly one must have genius; an ordinary artist can never do anything but parody."

Yes, she will wish to paint truly, like Bastien-Lepage, even equal this great artist, and perhaps, as

she must dominate everything and everybody, surpass him.

IN THE FLAME

AND now, another trial of the wings and another cruel fall. Hardly have the pupils of the Atelier Julian had time to see their newly inspired comrade again when there is compassionate whispering:

"You know, it seems Mousse is in a dangerous condition. . . . They have sent for Charcot and Potain. . . . "

It is true. Charcot and Potain have come. The invisible disease, the disease forgotten and always present, has prostrated her again.

Madame Bashkirtseff and Dina, who have remained in Russia, speed to Paris in answer to a dispatch from Madame Romanoff. A pleurisy. The rumor circulates among Marie's acquaintances that the girl is dying. Friends, greatly alarmed, present themselves at the house with bouquets of violets. They are astonished, and almost terrified, to be received by the girl herself, covered with blistering poultices, but

up and about, and though her fever has not subsided in two weeks, refusing to "capitulate" and deporting herself "like a natural person". She complains only of the quinine which makes her deaf. One night she thought she would die of terror when she was not able to hear the ticking of her watch. Dina does not leave her. "She is so nice!" Brother Paul and his wife have arrived. The father also is here. The closest friends, the Gavinis, the young princes Karageorgevitch, Bojidar and Alexis, come every day to inquire about her. The doctors have not concealed the gravity of her condition.

Sorrow and tears are dissembled in the presence of this heroic invalid, who denies the danger and overcomes it by sheer insolence. Julian is there, deeply affected in spite of his forced gayety. He is a true friend, sincere, tender, and wise. He advises Marie to slow down. But she is thinking only of the time she is wasting. This interruption of her work is a worse affliction than her fever. "Oh good Lord, aren't they going to cure me, and quickly?" December 15, after four weeks and two days of illness, she makes a scene with one of her doctors, "the sub-Potain", who does not know how to calm her, when

she abandons her pose of gay mockery, weeping real tears, and, with her hair tumbling about her, stammers childish griefs in childish language.

Finally, December 21, Marie is able to go out in her coupé, the windows raised, a bearskin at her feet. She rages, because she has been ordered South again. Strange creature, fascinating in this tragic combat in which she thinks herself the stronger. Again the attack has not been fatal. December 29 Moussia declares herself cured, goes to try on dresses, appears at the Bois, in the studio, goes to the Russian church on Sunday, to keep people from saying, as they have said for a month, that she is on the point of death. Again, a splendid rally. Marie undertakes four portraits at once, of Dina, of her sister-in-law Nini (Alexandrine), Irma her usual model, and even of her concierge. She attempts something else, equally strenuous. In January, 1882, in simultaneous celebration of her resurrection and of the Russian New Year, she persuades her parents to give a great party which establishes the social position of the Bashkirtseffs in Paris and realizes one of the triumphs long desired by this indefatigable climber. After which she has to be taken in great

haste to Nice, not to the beautiful residence on the Promenade des Anglais, but to a place farther inland away from the dampness of the shore, the very comfortable villa Misé-Brun.

Another interruption. Marie naturally will not be able to send anything to the Salon of 1882. These last months she has had to travel in Spain, to keep to her room with a pleurisy on her return, then to be placed in the hotbed of Nice. Nevertheless she has done all she has been able to do. The open-air studies which she brings back from the South win her the very reserved approval of Julian and Tony. She must return to the apprentice labors of the school. A very laudatory article on Louise Breslau in *Figaro*, by Wolff, has permitted Moussia to measure the distance her comrade has gained. She feels the anguish of being out of the race. Hence the extravagant expressions in her Diary on the successes of Breslau, on Breslau's exhibition in May 1882. "God has been good to me in not letting me utterly die of Breslau, at least not today. I do not know how to say this to keep it from sounding spiteful." Nervous impulse, emotional depression, certainly not mere envy. But the successes of her rival, her equal, make her well

aware of the lamentable state of her own work. She suffers from her inability to work consistently. She becomes downcast as easily and disproportionately as she becomes exalted. "I am going to do sculpture," she declares to Julian. "Of a pretty lifeless sort," is the answer. Who knows? She has thought a good deal about sculpture, and she had a right to, Mademoiselle Breslau tells me. Saint-Marceaux had said, "Your drawings are sculptor's drawings." Falguière also encouraged her. She models at night in her studio, a very fine one now, for her family has rented the house in the rue Ampère, and she has reserved the entire second story for herself. There is also a garden where she can make open-air studies. For she certainly does not intend to give up painting. The urge she felt in Spain rises in her, and the influence of Jules Bastien-Lepage, more dominant than ever, is to direct her. She has seen the studies which the young master brought back from London. She is ready to go her own course, at her own speed, and his is not a curbing influence. She would like to be the painter of the street as Bastien-Lepage is the painter of the country. She sketches everywhere, on the benches of the public square, at the market. She

makes a pencil drawing of a blonde young girl looking into the forbidding window of a dark shop where mortuary wreaths are displayed. She goes painting, at the risk of her life, in the fogs of the Seine. She visits an orphan asylum and distributes bonbons to the little urchins who crowd around her "like delightful animals". (Sketch: "Jesus and the Children".)

She is seized at this time by the sacred delirium which is known to all workers in the arts, to the strivers in all the fields of expression, accomplishment or speculation. One creates, one feels oneself grow. What will the results be? One does not know, and after all, what does it matter? The instant is sublime. It is an "incubation of celestial things" and one is marvelously freed from the limitations of one's humanity.

Because Bastien-Lepage intends to depict an Ophelia and a Marguerite, Marie too conceives a Marguerite, not the Opera singer in cashmir robe, but the real, human village girl, astonished, smiling, pensive, who feels something awaken in her, something indescribably strange, charming and sad. As she thinks too of an Ophelia, she asks Doctor Po-

tain to take her to Sainte-Anne to see the madwomen. But above all, above all, there is one subject that grips her, that possesses her; in it she will express her great artistic idea, realism in mysticism; and she will attempt and abandon it time after time: "The Holy Women Before the Tomb". She chooses for representation the most frightful moment of the sublime drama, when Joseph of Arimathea has buried the body of Jesus and the stone has been rolled before the Sepulchre. Everybody has gone away. Night has come. Mary Magdalen and the other Mary alone remain before the tomb. Grandeur, terrifying simplicity, exhaustion of grief; the frightful something in the contemplation of human non-existence, these are to be expressed by the poor symbolic women. "No convention nor holiness; make it as you believe it was, and feel what you are making." Her disdain of artifice in the material rendering of the pictures raises extreme difficulties for Marie. She ought to find a real Jewish tomb, go to Jerusalem, realize there the exact setting, there group the models, in the actual garments, frayed with real wear. She wants a Magdalen capable of a profound expression of human despair. "It is

the end of everything. One must feel the stupor of a soul in which nothing is left." Into this creation, this sharing of the emotion by which she herself is transported, Marie will put all her will, stronger than her life. "My hand powerless to express what my mind *wishes?* Oh, come. Ah my God, I fall on my knees and supplicate Thee not to oppose this happiness. It is in all humility, prostrate in the dust, that I supplicate Thee . . . not even to aid me, to deign only to permit that I work without too many obstacles." Marie implored "the neutrality of God".

This picture, even while she applies herself to her other studies, while she prepares her Salon entries, will be her devouring preoccupation. She will work on it with fear and joy, with terror and frenzy. It is by this picture, she is sure, that she will attain the goal of her ardent life, that she will realize herself in the glory of which she dreams. It is still her picture which obsesses her when in February, 1883, essaying sculpture, she makes the preliminary model of a woman standing, weeping with her head in her hands. There is in this pose an abandon so true, so complete, so young, so sincere, so tragic, that she is very much struck. At first she has the idea of

reproducing it as one of the Marys of her picture. But she thinks that nude it would be an adorable Nausicaa. She is so pleased with this model that she wants to kneel before it, and says a thousand mad things: "I ripped up a beautiful batiste chemise to envelope the frail little statuette. I love this clay more than my skin."

All this has not prevented her from going back to work at the school and preparing her Salon pictures of 1883. She exhibits a pastel (head of Irma), and a picture influenced by the art of Bastien-Lepage, "Jean and Jacques", two urchins of seven and four walking along a sidewalk holding hands. The pastel receives a mention, the painting does not. Marie has hoped the contrary. Her friend Bojidar secures the ribbon with which the pastel is honored and carries it off to the rue Ampère. Marie fastens it to Coco's tail, and the dog goes wild with terror.

Ever the child. But now Marie has armed herself with a confidence which makes her believe that henceforth "every stroke will go home". She works at the Grande Jatte, in pumps and a shawl, among the canoeists. She paints in the fog. Julian observes that her face has become pale and tells her that she

looks like an autumn landscape, a deserted lane full of mist and the desolation of winter. "Just what I have been painting, monsieur." She also makes a portrait of Bojidar, and one of Dina, a superb harmony in white. More important, she paints a portrait of herself, life size, head, shoulders, and waist, in her black work dress, white collar and jabot, much better, much truer, than the portrait of the same charming model by Tony Robert-Fleury.

Finally, Marie Bashkirtseff finishes her great picture, "The Meeting", which hangs today in the foreign section of the Musée du Luxembourg: seven urchins holding a conference in front of the board-fence of a suburban lumber-yard. No medal, but this time a good press, a real success with the public, with artists, and with Parisian society. Baude engraves the picture for *Le Monde Illustré*. Art publishers reproduce it, as do foreign journals. Collectors present themselves in the rue Ampère, offering to buy Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff's canvases and drawings. Marie tastes the intoxicating wine of glory. But she does not become intoxicated. "The Meeting" is only "The Meeting", a small thing compared with what she will exhibit next year, for next year she will

exhibit "The Holy Women", the masterpiece in which an art and soul will communicate; which will mark the hour of destiny, the luminous hour.

The luminous hour! Alas, the moth is in the flame. Next year Marie Bashkirtseff will be dead, and "The Holy Women", unfinished, will be hung in her tomb.

CHAPTER V

Chérie

A BOOK JUST OUT

"*HAVE* you read *Chérie?*"

For at least three months in 1884 this question was put to every visitor in the drawing rooms of Paris, and invariably received the same answer.

"I have read *Chérie*. It is a scandal!"

Moussia, who read everything, had procured the novel of Edmond de Goncourt as soon as it came out. She had turned the pages with an extreme curiosity, then with a sort of wrath, finally with a lofty disgust. The last of the Goncourts had undertaken to present, in the naturalist manner, a study of a young girl whose background is that of luxury, wealth, and good society. "I think I am able to maintain," said the author, "that there are few such books about woman, about the intimate femininity of her being,

from childhood to the age of twenty, few books founded on so many chats, confidences, feminine confessions: favors—quite literary—accorded, alas! to the novelist past sixty." One feels in the book the age of the author. It is the work of an old man who has created an old child. An excellent preface introduces the mediocre novel—"a minor work", writes Rosny *aîné* in his afterword to the limited edition. It is a book made of pieces imperfectly joined. Few women have recognized themselves completely in this mirror-in-fragments which the weary writer held up to them. At the very most they have recognized here and there an element of their personality, and the isolated detail is always deceptive. But these fragments of reality united before the eyes of an exceptional reader in the rue Ampère and presented an image which was not at all unknown to her. Did "Chérie" resemble Moussia? There were, at least, between the heroine of the novel and the author of the Diary common traits so exactly interchangeable that there was reason for asking oneself if Marie Bashkirtseff, who was much talked of at that time in Parisian society, had not served as prototype for Edmond de Goncourt's heroine.

YOUNG GIRL IN SOCIETY

"*CHÉRIE*" is a young girl in society. In 1884 Moussia frequents the drawing rooms where one would have been able to meet Chérie. Marie Bashkirtseff has realized completely, by this time, her ambition of being received without reserve by the élite of Paris. Friends have helped in this, the Gavinis at first, then Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert, her delightful comrade of the Atelier Julian, and Mademoiselle Canrobert's mother, la Maréchale. The names of the persons she meets, by whom she is received and whom she receives, become more and more numerous in the pages of the Diary. In 1878 Marie and her mother are invited to the Easter supper given by the Russian ambassador at the archpriest's, where the Russian élite of Paris assemble. In 1881, again during Holy Week, Prince Orloff [1]

[1] In my novel "Le Masque aux Yeux d'Or" I have made Marie Bashkirtseff the child appear at a party given by Prince Orloff at the Russian embassy in 1873. This appearance, and the rôle which I make the young Slav play in the same book, belong to fiction. But all the words I put into the girl's mouth are in fact Marie's. I have had only to draw upon her notes, published or unpublished, or upon the recollections of her friends.

comes to greet Madame Bashkirtseff at the Russian church, and converses with her husband, who is then visiting Paris. "Orloff went up to my father, shook hands with him, saying that he was very glad to see him." In 1882 the Bashkirtseff ladies are received at Queen Isabelle's; they are on visiting terms with the two Duchesses of Fitz-James, the Countess Turenne, the Viscountess de Janzé, Madame de Briey. Marie appears in the Bois in a carriage with Mademoiselle de Charette. Later Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert will take her friend to Princess Mathilde's.

We see these ladies received by the most aristocratic society, not to mention the society of the diplomats and of the fashionable artists. The gowns of Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff are cited in the society notes of *Figaro*. In her Gallery of girls of the aristocracy who are going in for the arts, Étincelle devotes an article to Moussia, and will devote another to Mademoiselle Canrobert. January 15, 1882, Monsieur Bashkirtseff, "marshal of the nobility of Poltava", and Madame Bashkirtseff hold a reception for which two hundred invitations are issued. The event is of importance. The cards bear the name

and recent title of Monsieur Constantine Bashkirtseff. Marie, by sheer patience and will power, has accomplished the miracle of bringing back to his wife's side "this hard man, a stranger to every family sentiment". "We all live in harmony," writes the young girl in April 1881. Belated harmony, tenderness assumed for the sake of social standing. Monsieur Bashkirtseff spends very little time in Paris. His honorary functions demand his presence in his own country, where he has his habits and—Madame Bashkirtseff is not unaware—another household. Incidentally, Moussia's father is suffering at this moment from a malady similar to hers, and he will die of it sixteen months after the famous reception.

It was a brilliant affair, as described in the *Figaro* article under the signature of Étincelle (Madame de Péronny, with whom Marie is on amicable terms). The two brothers Coquelin spoke monologues and acted a little sketch. There was "a dazzling cotillion with figures never danced before", followed by "an exquisite supper". Among the guests *Figaro* cited the Dowager Duchess Fitz-James, Princess Karageorgevitch in fine ruby velvet, "with her heraldic diamonds"; Madame Gavini in

white watered silk covered with Spanish blond lace; the Marquise de Lambertye in white satin and lace, wearing a profusion of diamonds; Princess Eristoff (sister of Monsieur Bashkirtseff) in a somber and poetic "Nuit d'Orient" gown sparkling with sapphires; the Marquise de Reverseaux, like a czarina, her long train of blue satin lined with sable, a crescent of diamonds on her blonde head; the Countess Kessler, Madame Thouvenel, pretty Madame de Sonis, Mademoiselle de Villevieille in a gown of pale blue with Trianon fleurettes. Among the men, General Fleury, the former grand equerry of Napoleon III, and the former Ambassador of France to Russia; and his brother, Viscount Fleury; Prince Karageorgevitch; Monsieur Janvier de la Motte; Count Gurowski; Baron de Saint-Amand; Tony Robert-Fleury; Count Plater; Count de Damas; Count de Montgommery; Messieurs Thouvenel, de Joly, Gavini; the Count Caracciolo, etc, etc. Naturally, in this historic circumstance, the Bashkirtseff-Romanoff-Babanine family was dazzling, with the collaboration of Doucet and Worth. The young wife of Paul Bashkirtseff wore ivory satin and pearls; the blond Dina made a great effect in satin and white

jade. Madame Bashkirtseff had a long train of violet velvet and Madame Romanoff a train of mauve satin "Louis XIV". As for Moussia, she, said the account, was an exquisite Greuze figure in her white silk mull with a line of Bengal roses down the dress and along the train.

"If you will take my advice, mademoiselle, you will not dance," she had been told by one of her doctors, the "sub-Potain" who was present at this ball.

Marie, barely recovered from a very grave pleurisy, had danced till dawn, not for the pleasure of the dance, but for the satisfaction of being admired, and here we recognize one of the points of veracity in the Goncourt novel.

THE REVOLT OF THE LILY

LIKE Chérie, Moussia wished to appear with the splendor of a new star among the social constellations of her time. She delighted in "the murmurs of an almost annoying admiration" and in "that coquetry without tenderness which courts the crowd". Let us not be too scandalized

by this taste for being thought beautiful. In this order of feminine sins, there is much of Moussia and Chérie everywhere. Only one thing matters, that the charming woman be really charming, and Moussia to the last was fascinating. "I saw her only once, and only for an hour; I shall never forget her," said François Coppée, and this single meeting was in May 1884, five months before her death.

From eighteen to twenty-three Marie retains almost the same physical aspect, as to which we are precisely informed by her Diary, according to the quite vivid recollections of the men and women who have known her, numerous photographs, and especially the portrait which the artist herself painted in 1883 and which can be seen today in the Museum of Nice. "Marie," said Mademoiselle Breslau, "presented a truly artistic appearance. Not like a mannequin, but fastidiously elegant; she was a thorough aristocrat." "In exquisite taste," adds Madame la Générale Goiran. Albert Besnard recalls the white and gold vision which impressed him in Italy: "The head of a little cat with gilt fur. When she raised her chin one saw the two pink nostrils."

Finally, let us not forget the minute and impudent

description which Moussia gives of herself, with an evident eagerness to please us:

"I am of medium height. I have pretty hair, silky, golden and curly, which if let down will reach below my waist. I have a round face, a big white forehead concealed with bangs like those of the child Louis XIV in the picture on the great stair at Versailles, representing the death of Louis XIII. Thick brows, dark, well formed, somewhat arched. Gray eyes, rather big, often dark at night, sometimes brilliant, lashes of the same color as the brows. A nose —ah! a nose; it is more difficult to describe; it is neither long nor short and has a pretty skin, which, it appears, is very rare, generally the ugliest skin being found on the nose. Anyway it is a good nose, and that is that. The mouth is small, vermilion, with corners infinitely soft. I have pretty white teeth, a round neck, with a well-marked dimple, small, pink, shell-like ears. The neck is perhaps not long enough for a figure in a classical painting, but very good all the same for a woman, especially when beneath it are beautiful shoulders, a breast high and white as milk. I have such nice curves that people think I always wear a bustle. My feet and hands are al-

most classical. I was about to forget my complexion: I am white and pink and my skin is very fine at the temples. One can even see the veins there, as also at each side of my mouth, principally the left side. Near the right eye, on the temple, I have a beauty spot, and another, very small, on the left cheek, a bit lower, in the velvety place. What is this fancy for describing myself? I suppose I do it for my own pleasure."

Chérie would not have spoken differently. This narcissism was hers. And observe that she had exactly the same taste in dress as Moussia, who revolted against an unesthetic and deforming fashion. Like Moussia, Chérie refused to follow the "drapery" fashion, so popular at that time, and preferred to obtain from the fabric the light envelopment and the supple fall which harmonize with the feminine figure, the precious side, ideal, ethereal, of the young girl revealing itself through a sort of chiffon spirituality.

Chérie, like Moussia, saw in dress a means of expressing the artist within her. The artist could not be satisfied with feminine fashions in a time when women wore bustles.

Marie had emancipated herself from the bustle and liked to appear at a ball in a Louis XV, Directoire, or Empire gown. "My style," she said, "is the mythological." She was, by turns, a blonde Psyche, a Velasquez infanta, a Greuze ingenue, or more simply a charming subject for Jules Lefebvre, who knew so well how to draw supple young figures in lightly enveloping fabrics. She must have been a vision indeed as she made her appearance at a social gathering, her head high, somewhat imperious, somewhat self-conscious, but with something childlike about her, which made one not only forgive these attitudes but find them enchanting.

Moussia, Chérie—and who really would reproach them for it!—liked to make of their persons, by a diversity of adornment, that "charming and fragile object of art, always changing, always new", enveloped in "that bit of dream with which every woman invests her beauty". Moussia and Chérie alike lingered long before the mirror, in languorous adoration of their persons.

Up to this point there has been perfect identity between the young girl of the novel and the young girl who reads the novel. Now we are to tread dan-

gerous ground. Edmond de Goncourt had wished his heroine to be a creature not devoid of the humanity which is sexless, abstract, "mistakenly ideal". Of frail appearance, but of good constitution and in possession of all her vital forces, Chérie was endowed with the temperament of the woman who can truly love. She had the hot blood which demands marriage. Nevertheless, Chérie did not marry, and Marie read with perplexity these lines to which perhaps she gave a personal application: "The very young girl's real reason for refusing offers of marriage is her firm belief that suitors with an income of a hundred thousand livres will not cease to present themselves every day and forever."

For lack of a husband, would Chérie take a lover? Decidedly not. In the torments of the flesh, in time of temptation, Goncourt affirmed, the society girl is very often preserved by an aid which is not a matter of religion nor of morality. "It is simply a feminine sentiment, peculiar to the fastidious woman. An incessant preoccupation with that which ornaments and beautifies, a perpetual seeking of the ideal in the lovely, give a young girl like Chérie a revulsion against the material fault, a fear like that which

the ermine has of soiling its white fur. . . . A sort of religious adoration of her body, of her divine little person; this it is and nothing more. The young girl quite simply has made of herself a sort of little Holy Virgin in a shrine of white satin, and she wishes to remain, in her own eyes, always the immaculate madonna of her shrine."

I can imagine Marie, up to this point, turning the pages of Goncourt's book without irritation, without disapproval, with only, here and there, a slight *moue* of lips and eyes. But because she has certainly identified herself with Chérie in the beginning, Moussia was to resent the second part of the book as if it contained matter personally insulting.

The disequilibrium produced in "Chérie" by her failure to find the necessary mate; the sensuality of her perfumes; the extreme nervousness aroused by the marriage of friends; her hysteria, her consumption, madness and death; all this second part of the novel of Goncourt, Marie rejected with wrung heart. She contemplated with relief and gratitude her own personal life, so full of intellectual and artistic effort. She resented the book as she resented stupid and insulting gossip, such, for example, as the rumor

that she had had herself abducted when she went to Nice with her family in 1882. "It is I who am attacked. . . . And when, quite tranquil and alone in my room and among my books, after working eight or ten hours, I think that they can be telling wild tales about me, that I am morally torn from this tomb-like solitude, undressed, commented on, disfigured, that they attribute to me thoughts, acts . . . Well! my arms sink at my sides and I have a desire to cry."

Marie certainly has no secret for the gossips to pry into. In the home in the rue Ampère, where the family has been living since 1883, the whole second story has been reserved for her. She has an antechamber, two bedrooms, a library and a studio joined together in which she is always to be found except when asleep or visiting. This is not the blue satin confection of the house in Nice. Instead of the sea shell there is a very simple iron bed. The studio and the work room adjoin the place of repose. A host of finished and unfinished studies, a skeleton, a little chemical laboratory, a harp, a heap of closely written notebooks, sketch books, an inkwell with goose quills of all colors, easels, a library of seven hundred

well-chosen volumes, a Montesquieu and a Plato often open on the table among volumes of Michelet's History of France, or of Taine's "Origins" and "Critical Essays", numbers of Madame Juliette Adam's *Nouvelle Revue*, these compose the background of her personal life and it is among these witnesses to her moral energy, to her proud mastery over her material being that Moussia raises a cry of protest against the novelist's imputations.

A LETTER.

Monsieur Edmond de Goncourt.
Monsieur:

Like everybody else, I have read Chérie, and between you and me, this book is full of drivel. The person who has the audacity to write this to you is a young woman reared in a rich, elegant, somewhat eccentric family. This woman, who is twenty-three years old, is educated, artistic, ambitious. She possesses notebooks in which she has jotted down her impressions since the age of twelve. Nothing has been evaded. The young woman in question has a pride which makes her, in her notes, display herself quite completely. For her to show them to anyone is to strip herself naked. But she has for all the true arts an intense love, indeed a mad love. She thinks it might be interesting to show you this Diary. You say somewhere that authentic

self-observations are your passion. Well! She thinks as you do and offers you hers.

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF
May 1884

One night in December, 1891, seven years after Marie's death, Maurice Barrès, dining with Edmond de Goncourt at Alphonse Daudet's, spoke of the publication, in incomplete form, of Marie Bashkirtseff's Diary, to which the enthusiastic article of Gladstone had brought immediate celebrity.

"Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff," said Goncourt. "Ah, yes, I remember this Diary. She offered once to send it to me. My word, I really believe I neglected to answer."

"And you doubtless made a great mistake, my dear Goncourt," said the master of the house.

CHAPTER VI

Moussia (*Attempt at a Moral Portrait*)

CONTRASTS

MOUSSIA was certainly not Chérie. Similarity of coquetries and social gestures does not suffice to establish the identity of the personalities. Marie Bashkirtseff refused to recognize herself in the portrait of this young society girl whom Edmond de Goncourt represented not as an accidental type of nervous invalid, but as the normal product of her atmosphere and environment. But if Moussia was not Chérie what was she?

Now that we are approaching the termination of this career, let us try to draw a moral portrait of Marie Bashkirtseff which shall synthesize the contradictory elements of her complex and attractive personality. It will be difficult to locate the unity in this diversity, for never was there a character more rich in contrasts.

Marie Bashkirtseff is a woman, very much a wo-

man, with vitality. "Of the woman," she says, "I have only the envelope, I have only the skin, but this envelope, this skin, is devilishly feminine." She has a love of action, effort, direction, domination; and her will to dominate is not a matter of vanity, but is an objective desire to accomplish. She confesses that she is a barbarian and she seems to us to suffer from over-refinement. She has the violence of the primitive and lives at her ease only in environments of luxury. She has stupefying boldness and initiative, along with the timidity of a frightened little girl. "I become pale and red many times, before daring to say that I have the intention of exhibiting or making a picture." From an imperious and irritating pride she passes to a humility in which she regards herself as "less than the dust." She has, she says, a hundred thousand pretensions, of which not one is justified. "I bump into everything and bruise myself all over."

Nevertheless Marie Bashkirtseff's pride dominates her life and unless we understand it we cannot understand her. It is not the sterile sentiment which agitates the empty, it is the powerful force which drives the richly endowed to accomplish great things,

a superior destiny or an irreproachable dream of glory. October 9, 1875, a Marie Bashkirtseff of fifteen writes in her Diary:

"If, from my first entrance into life, I had met only solicitous courtiers with heads ever bowed; if I had walked only on blazons, and slept only under royal canopies; if I had had a long line of ancestors, each successive generation more glorious, more haughty than the one before it; it seems to me I should not be more proud, more arrogant than I am."

Are these expressions annoying? Let us read the sequel:

"Oh my God, how I thank Thee! These ideas, which come to me from Thee, will hold me in the straight path, so that never for an instant shall I take my eyes off the luminous star toward which I march!"

Marie's pride is the force which impels her toward the star.

By turns imperious and submissive, cruel and caressing, even wheedling, "she knew how to turn people whichever way she wished," Mademoiselle Breslau has told me. At home, where she exercises least self-control, she kneels for pardon after an out-

burst. Once in Nice, while she is away, someone disorders, quite trivially, the arrangement of the little physical and chemical laboratory which she has constructed for herself. Marie furiously shatters tubes, retorts, crystals. "She is not a girl!" exclaims good Aunt Romanoff, raising her arms to heaven. "She is a monster, she is a horror!" One night, as a greatly anticipated invitation to a ball has not arrived, Marie relieves the tension of her nerves by breaking chairs; then when the invitation finally comes, she throws the mutilated furniture into the fire to hide the traces of her violence. Another time at Nice, in a crisis of wrath "so fierce that she groaned aloud," she went to drown the dining-room clock in the sea—she was followed by her cousin Dina, who feared a more sinister project. But after her gestures of fury or her fits of impertinence, Marie does not hesitate to punish herself. To expiate some petty fault, in her own fashion, she decides to make herself ugly, and dykes herself out in the dress and hat of Aunt Romanoff. After a saucy reply to Madame Bashkirtseff, she locks herself in her little drawing room, in the dark, and makes long penitent prayers. She is a mixture of savagery and tender childishness.

laughter following close upon tears, merriment driving away anguish, her better nature quickly recapturing its dominant rôle.

Marie is in love with the ideal, with purity, beauty, but she admits, humanly, that a certain amount of sin is as necessary to life as a certain volume of air. By turns, according to her confession, she "gives off light or she is like an extinguished lantern." With a word one exalts or depresses her. She coops herself up for hours to write her Diary, which is a meditation in words, then she goes out and indulges in a mad whirl of activity. In everything she dreams on a heroic scale; she studies to amplify her existence, and at the same minute she envisages the end of everything, non-existence. In her are opposed, and perhaps reconciled, the feeling of the precarious and the urge toward perfection, the vision of an unimaginable eternity of human realization.

Contrast always and in everything. Marie is reserved, she confides in no one, she has none of those friendships in which one opens one's soul; but every day of her life she prepares a confession in which she shows herself naked and which she will fling to the

great public to devour. "You do not know me," she said to Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert. "No one knows me. What I am, only my Diary knows and will tell." In fact, much of Moussia's nature revealed to us in the Diary was unknown to persons intimately acquainted with her. Marie's true expression is always masked. When she wishes to weep, she makes droll remarks. "Laughter is in my nature, and it is independent of my mood. I am always very gay and very droll for others. I laugh as much as Mademoiselle Samary of the Théâtre-Français. But it is not I laughing, it is my face." So she succeeds in disguising her true states of mind. "The more occasion there is to be moved, the more I joke to destroy even the appearance of having a heart and soul." Naturally she is little understood, is badly misunderstood, except perhaps by those who share her very intimate existence.

To see the real Marie Bashkirtseff one must constantly supplement the confessions of the Diary with the revelations of Marie's acquaintances and then contrast the recollections with the revelations of the Diary. Thus her daily notes frequently give us the impression that she is hard and selfish, and all

her surviving friends assure us that she was extremely tender-hearted, madly generous.

She defends those who are attacked in her presence. Many times she is seized by an infinite tenderness and would give all she has. "It is in my nature to wish to make the whole world happy." "It amuses me to give a great pleasure to one who is not expecting it and who for me is a chance passer-by." "Real egotists can do nothing but good: one is too unhappy doing evil."

One day, because she has met some wretchedly poor persons, she goes to the Charity Bureau and gives away her whole allowance, a thousand francs; then dashes out of the office as if she were being pursued.

A young governess is engaged to accompany Marie to the painting school. This person is so displeasing to her physically as almost to cause her a nervous illness. "I shall catch an aneurism running up the stairs like mad so as to get ahead of her and have a second of the trip without her." Nevertheless, Marie keeps her for three years, purely out of pity, and when Mademoiselle X. returns to her own country, Marie has to restrain herself forcibly from crying. She can-

not console herself for not being able to make up for the coldness, the indifference, which the woman, leaving her for good, has had to suffer.

She also is affected by the powers of love and faithful devotion which she finds in her dogs. When her Pincio disappears, she is desolated at the thought that the animal is in the hands of strangers, that he suffers because his mistress is not there, that perhaps he is being ill-treated. When Prater dies, she reproaches herself, as at the death of a human being, for having preferred Pincio to him and having caused him an obscure sorrow by her injustice or thoughtlessness.

Thoughtlessness and injustice are not, however, in her character. There is some appearance of them, which, if we take the trouble to penetrate the contradictory complexity of her excessive sensibility and furious eagerness of living, we shall find to be appearance only. A doctor whom Marie loved dearly, almost a member of her family, "the angelic Doctor Walitzky", the kind and modest physician who had always given her the most attentive care, the wisest and most tender, dies after a short illness. Marie passes the morning in tears at the bedside of the

dead man. But in the afternoon she takes the train to Versailles to be present at a session of the Chamber of Deputies. She meets Paul de Cassagnac, and she reproaches herself for diverting herself on this afternoon of sorrow. We too are inclined to reproach her. But she disarms us with the pages of her Diary in which she confides to us that she "cannot realize Walitzky's death", that, if it were true, it would be too frightful, that she still feels his living presence near her; and these words appease criticism by their deep sincerity.

Marie's father falls ill, very ill, in the spring of 1883. Madame Bashkirtseff hastens to Russia. Marie remains at home in the rue Ampère. The very precarious state of her own health at the time can justify her in this, but we are inclined to believe, on no authority, that she is really detained by the opening of the Salon of 1883, in which she is exhibiting. There is very bad news from Russia. Monsieur Bashkirtseff is dying. Days pass. May 22, Marie tells us in her Diary that she is anxiously awaiting a dispatch. One thinks naturally that her impatience is for a message from Russia. Not at all. It is not the daughter who is uneasy, it is the artist burning to

know if her work has received a prize at the Salon. True, Monsieur Bashkirtseff has been a mediocre husband, an indifferent father. He has cared little about the infant prodigy who is accustomed to the extreme tenderness of those about her. He has reappeared in Marie's existence only very late and in an intermittent fashion. He has given her no true affection, aid, or guidance. But, all the same, he is her father, and the total indifference of his daughter in this supreme hour would shock us if it had really been indifference. The truth is that the Diary cannot express, line by line, her simultaneous sentiments. Let us turn some pages. Monsieur Bashkirtseff is dead. One sees that the daughter is stricken with grief and remorse, that a fierce moral struggle has begun within her at the reception of the news. Ought she not to have gone, in spite of her fragile health, in spite of her anxiety as to the destiny of the picture which marks a decisive step in her career? Later, when she is attending with solicitous care another great invalid, Jules Bastien-Lepage, she will not cease to be obsessed by self-reproach for not having been at the bedside of her father, as at the bedside of this artist who is simply her friend.

In the realm of ideas, Marie's sensibility compounds with her pride to give utterance to some vigorous and lofty expressions. She does not understand, for example, how one can give one's life for a perishable creature. The sacrifice of the individual to the individual appears to her excessive, not only from the sentimental point of view but from the moral. She admits, on the other hand, that one may reasonably undergo every torture and die for a principle, for anything which can ameliorate the condition of man in general.

Thus Marie adopts the largest humanitarian theories. But this young Russian living in France nevertheless remains very patriotic, like all Slavs at a distance from their frontiers. She follows with a great deal of emotion the campaign of the Russians against the Turks in the summer of 1877. "Who is the creature miserable enough, contemptible enough, to forget his country in danger?" Yet Marie is thoroughly acclimated to France, is quite comfortable at a great distance from an empire in which the liberty of her speech and the audacity of her ideas would undoubtedly have cost her a trip to Siberia.

Marie Bashkirtseff has retained something of the Slavic temperament, not a great deal. One would not say that she is a character from Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, or Bunine. But she has the nomadic instinct of her compatriots, the delirious pride concealed by an intermittent modesty; this however is explained and even justified in her by exceptional potentialities. Of the Slavic temperament again she has the taste for sorrow, the constantly dramatized inquietude, the indefinite revery, which compose a sort of belated romanticism. But what does not exist at all in her is ennui, that Russian ennui which drives her compatriots even to death as an escape. "I am sometimes sad, discouraged, or enraged, but bored, never." One cannot be bored when one has such resources as she has, especially that fervor of living. "There is within me such an exuberance of *everything*, that if I did not discharge some of my excess energy I could not stand it."

So she never thought of living her exacting life in Poltava, nor even in Saint Petersburg. She needed Paris, "the departure from everything".

Despite some saucy witticisms, Marie definitely adopted France, its luxuries, its customs, and even

its history and representative men. The tragic end of the Prince Imperial in 1879 arouses a strong emotion in her and she sheds tears. The death of Gambetta, January 1, 1883, moves her as if she had lived through the year of the disaster, as a French woman. "What I mourn at present," she writes, "I could well express only if I had the honor of being French and the happiness of being a man." At the seventy-ninth anniversary of Victor Hugo, we see her mingling with the crowd under the windows of the poet, and so enthusiastic that she presses the hand of the person next to her thinking it is Dina's and perceiving after an instant that the hand is that of a stranger.

After her beloved classics of antiquity, it is French literature which is her chief intellectual nourishment. Balzac to her appears colossal. Daudet and Flaubert are the first among the moderns. She defends Zola, "a giant". "Dear French, here is another whom you pretend to fail to recognize!" Another contradiction: Marie is a passionate admirer of Zola, and she weeps over "Paul and Virginia".

It is in assimilating French culture that Marie develops her taste for analysis, learns to control her-

self, and ceases entirely, in the last years of her life, to be a little barbarian. She worships Taine, she has read Sainte-Beuve, she is decidedly Renanian. Two months before her death, she will write that everything is for her a subject of observation, reflection, analysis. "A gaze, a face, a sound, a joy, a sorrow, are immediately weighed, examined, verified, classed, noted. And when I have spoken or written, I am satisfied." Elsewhere she complains of her essentially "finicky" character, which makes her seek nuances in the great and the sublime, to split hairs, with only "empty results". Such remarks have contributed to the legend of Marie's hard-heartedness. It is not true, however, that the abuse of literature killed in her the spontaneity and profound stirrings of the heart. We know by now that she has the susceptibility of sentiments which, as she says prettily, is the perfume of the character. And this attempt at a moral portrait would be incomplete if we did not contemplate Marie equally in her love life and her spiritual life.

LOVE?

IT will be interesting to find what conception Marie Bashkirtseff has of love, now that she is a creature of experience, with mind completely formed by an ample culture and trained to habits of analysis which will amend her errors of imagination.

From the history of Marie's life, her illusions, her disappointments, her sufferings, we have seen that her sensitive femininity has not all gone into coquetry. How does she view herself in love, she who analyzes and defines herself in everything? Let us interrogate her Diary, her notes, her correspondence, and check her own judgments with the memories of those who have known her. To her friends, to Mademoiselle Canrobert notably, Marie gave the impression of being not very romantic. "But," they add, "she made us very few confidences." At fifteen the adolescent confessed to herself privately that nothing was equal to hearing words of love. Already, rare precocity, she considered love as something purely subjective, holding that there exists in each

of us a need of love, that the object of our love exists chiefly in our imagination. "If we cease to love one person, we transfer our affections to another, even without knowing it. If one does not love a man, one loves a dog or an article of furniture, and with the same force, though the object assumes another form." Love exists in us, and we do not escape its obsession for want of a worthy object. "Though one speak of glory, mind, beauty, one names them only to speak of love, to surround with magnificence that which never changes yet is always new." She is then at the age, sixteen, at which one dreams of anything and everything, from sheer necessity of dreaming. She is sure her heart will never cease to overflow, "as it has overflowed without occasion, never emptying itself, for in its depths are generous springs which aliment it, and these will not dry up." She invents a hero, a romance, a drama, and she laughs and cries over her invention, as if it were reality. Music, beautiful moonlight nights, put her in a delicious turmoil. "Beware of music, Pacha," she says to one of her lovers in Russia, "it makes one do many things which one would not do when one's blood is cool." She will not forget the nights

in Naples when, alone on her balcony listening to a serenade, she went into ecstasy without any particular reason. When she looks at the starry sky framed in the open window of her studio, she thinks that one could be happy if one had the luck to be in love. She finds an infinite charm in romantic meditation in the spiritual atmosphere of a church. "To dream and smile at one's dream," she writes, "is not a waste of time, for one can not have these instants whenever one wishes; one has them only when one is young, and we must enjoy them as we must enjoy all that God gives us." Kant claims that things have only the existence which our imagination gives them. Marie subscribes to this system, at least as regards things sentimental. She confesses that in her sixteenth year she searched in novels "with a deplorable avidity" for the expressions of love. At that time she employed the greatest words to describe the simplest adventures, and she was vexed at not being able to ascribe to herself any romantic, astonishing, overwhelming sensations. "I *interpreted* my sentiments; painters will understand me." The majority of young girls are, or have been, as inventive in these charming and perilous matters as Marie Bash-

kirtseff. But before the mirages which she creates and which dissipate each other, Moussia is sagely aware of the nullity of the realities, and here the other Moussia, the self-critic, aloof, resistant, appears. Since these adventures have not thrown men at her feet, these adventures have not existed. "I thank God that I am a good girl and not in love with anybody. If I were I should probably kill myself with my rage." (March 25, 1878.) She repeats (April 5): "No, I have never loved. If you could imagine how happy, free, proud and worthy I feel . . . worthy of him who is to come."

And she thinks at this date that he who is to come and with whom she could be in love, yet not "kill herself with rage", is perhaps near her, known to her, and that he has the features of Paul de Cassagnac.

Marie absolutely does not admit the surprise of the senses. Social leveling by love is ignoble, she notes after a reading of George Sand. "To establish equality is admirable; but let it not be the result of sex caprice."

Of course there are flirtations, social gallantries. Marie delights in tender badinage, but she keeps her

defensive weapons. "Be light with a serious, magnetic man, and severe with a light man! With men who do nothing but make love, one must bristle like a porcupine." She is not yet sixteen when she transcribes these words of prudence in her Diary.

She diverts herself hugely at mask balls. "This liberty to say anything enchants me. As for the liberties men would like to take with me—I set them right in a way that is charming." A fool, while dancing with her, attempts this gallantry: "It is always agreeable to have one's arm around a pretty waist." "Really?" she says. "I cannot see that it is so delightful; if the fashion were to hold each other by the ears, it would be all one to me."

Marie's passion for analysis is fully indulged in sentimental matters. She delights in hearing the confession of the sufferings which she has caused. With the curiosity of a true psychologist she studies the quality of the emotions she arouses. At seventeen she is aware that she has sometimes confounded the love she inspired with that which she felt. But this dilettantism of sentiment disappears when Marie loves sincerely, and we know that she loved Paul de Cassagnac at least. Then she has these touching and

deliciously feminine ideas: "I do not understand how one can be unhappy over anything whatever that is part of him whom one loves. I understand how one can criticize him whom one has loved, but not him whom one loves." "Something really beautiful, antique—that annihilation of the woman before the superiority of the loved man; it must be the greatest enjoyment of self-love which a superior woman can experience." (November , 1878.)

From fifteen to eighteen certainly Marie, by instinct, by imaginative training, was keenly curious about her new sensibility. From the age of twenty, after sentimental disappointments and wounds to her self-esteem, she reasons, and she reasons too much. She loses her freshness of soul. She has learned a good deal about life from social talk, studio talk, and from books, for she reads everything that is forbidden to the young girls of her epoch: Balzac, Goncourt, Maupassant, with whom she has correspondence, Daudet, including "Sapho", Zola entire, Stendhal especially, who seems to her the master of erotic psychology. Her personal conception of love dominates nevertheless the impressions gained from reading. She loftily detaches love from sensuality.

"Love," she says, "is a grandiose and pure sentiment, everything in it is chaste." Chaste? Then has she had no consciousness, even vague, of carnal materialities? Has she not experienced that taint of dreams from which Goncourt's Chérie was not preserved? When one attempts to analyze Marie Bashkirtseff, who proclaims her disdain of veils, her love of the realities, even of realism, one must carry the analysis to the end. I have had a look at penciled pages in which, after a feverish awakening, the young girl transcribed curiously the physical flurry caused by a very recent dream, at the same time vague and burning. She tells of her surprise in hesitant, awkward words. Another day, meditating on mysterious revelations of the same order, she scrawls in her Diary these sybilline words: "So it is like that!"

This is all that appears. The soul dominates these inquietudes and obscure calls. In May 1880 she writes:

"S—— kissed my hand, and I am sorry to confess that it caused me pleasure, not because of the object, but there was a . . . lot of things, and one is a woman nevertheless. This morning I still felt that

kiss on my hand." And she adds: "The kiss on the hand displeased me, especially when it gave me pleasure; one must not be a woman to that degree."

A too visible expression of languor on the face of her cousin Dina while indulging in amorous badinage with young men in Russia exasperates her and wounds her maidenly modesty. For she has a modesty of her own kind which, doubtless, is the best for her to have. "She was absolutely pure," Mademoiselle Breslau tells me, "cruelly chaste. For all that, she was ready to strip and show us her body as a model would have done, without a thought of anything but her esthetic purpose."

Just as she would admit of no leveling by "sex caprice", Marie would not consider, for herself, the possibility of irregular love. "As for having a lover, it must not even be thought of, with a character like mine. I should be so humiliated, so tormented, I should suffer so much. My first ego would perhaps say nothing, but the second ego, which desires everything for the first and, remembering Epictetus, wishes nothing for itself, but which has all its happiness in the first, that ego would not permit it, and

before that ego the first ego would be ashamed of doing wrong."

This is truly a matter of Marie's own decision, for she could take every conceivable liberty. I cannot imagine Mamma Bashkirtseff, or Aunt Romanoff, the blinded and submissive "mothers", organizing a very effective defense against the surprises of love of which their Moussia might be the victim. But the absolute purity of her being—and she attaches such importance to it that she will proclaim it in her last will and testament—partakes equally of morality and of the fastidiousness of a Chérie. She does not want a dark spot on her white dress.

I merely state, I do not comment. Would Marie Bashkirtseff have seemed less worthy of our sympathy and curiosity if she had let herself be carried away by the passion without calculation and reserve which manifests itself, for example, in the letters of "the unknown woman" to Alfred de Musset? Surely not. But she would have struck a quite different note. Marie Bashkirtseff is always the maiden with informed brain and cool flesh. In the letters which he was so kind as to write me about this biography, Maurice Barrès never named Marie Bashkirtseff. He

said always "the maiden", and the word had, under his pen, a precise meaning which determined a whole course of romantic reflection.

Did Marie resign all hope of a life of love, after her twentieth year, when disappointment had warned her to depend entirely on her reason? Decidedly not. She is too imaginative to cease to be a dreamer, even when discussion with herself tones down the bright colors of the dream. True, we shall hear her say defiantly that love cannot absorb her entirely, that it will be only an accessory, "the dome of the edifice, something charming but superfluous", and that an ever-busy woman, preoccupied with glory, does not love like those who have nothing else to think of. (July and December 1883.) But while she realizes that she has become very difficult, she still admits that she can love a man who is capable of moving her, of reassuring her, of conquering her morally. "It would be necessary that not a word, not a look be in disaccord with my own idea of him." (November 1883.) Not by any means that she asks perfection, a mate who is not human. It would suffice that the faults of the privileged man, if he has them, appear interesting, and that she

should not have to discover suddenly "something stupid, commonplace, petty, false, selfish". These are sentiments in which all young girls near marriage will recognize the minimum of their exactions and of their common apprehensions. Marie here appears to us as a girl entirely like other girls, and it is one of the charming things about this exceptional creature that she is not too exceptional in the tribulations of the heart. Within three months of her death Marie still cherishes her dream of a love life. She is vexed with herself for no longer occupying herself seriously with "the only thing that is worth while, the only thing that gives all happiness, makes one forget all miseries: love; love which accomplishes the miracle of the mingling of souls. One deludes oneself—what matter? *That which one believes to be, exists.* Love makes the world appear the way it ought to be. If I were God——"

Let us stop here. This profound, ardent, wringing cry is her swan song. A somewhat extensive analysis of Marie Bashkirtseff's sentimental speculations will not have been useless, we believe. It will aid us very soon to comprehend the exact nature of the sentiment which drew her to the dying Jules Bastien-

Lepage, a sentiment of a quality sufficiently rare to merit a revision of the current misconception of it.

TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE

IN her ideas of the divine, Marie is as diverse and contradictory as in her opinions and sentiments of the profane order.

At fifteen and sixteen, the young girl affirms vigorously that she believes in God and the Devil. She even feels in herself a certain need of idolatry, of material communication, and shows that she is very superstitious.

God in His simple grandeur does not suffice for her. She must have images to look at, crosses to kiss. "Last night I counted the beads of the rosary; there are sixty, and I prostrated myself sixty times, each time striking my forehead against the floor. I was out of breath, but it seemed to me that I did something agreeable to God. It is doubtless absurd, but the intention was there." August 13, 1878, on the way to the health resort, she promises "five hundred prostrations on the ground" if at her return she finds her grandfather alive. She carries out her promise

when she has the sorrowful satisfaction of seeing Monsieur Babanine a short time before his death.

She is very irregular in her devotions. "I go to church from time to time so that no one can say I am a nihilist." (November 10, 1879.) When she confesses, there is a very brief dialogue with the priest. She reports it thus in her Diary:

"You are not without sins," says the priest, after the customary prayer. "Are you subject to indolence?"

"Never."

"Pride?"

"Always."

"Have you offended any one?"

"I do not think so, but I may have, in little ways, Father; in nothing serious."

"Then may God pardon you, my daughter."

She has alternations of faith and skepticism. She prays a good deal, even on the days when she does not believe. "I have need of a God who will occupy himself with all my little affairs, and to whom I can speak about everything. . . . Nothing is more frightful than to be unable to pray." When she becomes rationalistic, she inclines to the conception

of an abstract God, a philosophic entity, but her sensibility accommodates itself very ill to a supreme being which is unimaginable and inaccessible. She must have a God who partakes of our humanity. "The Man-God and the Virgin Mother seem to understand us better than the true God." (October 27, 1881.) "I have returned to Christ and the Virgin, to the miracles, after being a deist, with days of absolute atheism." When she is afraid she calls upon God at once. "I should have died of despair by now if I did not believe in God." (March 26, 1880.) "Ah! He must know that I fear Him and that I fall on my knees and implore Him to permit me to work." She continues, however, to live in a spiritual doubt which takes by turns the form of rationalism and of supplicating humility. She has read Renan, and she is penetrated with skepticism. More than ever she is torn between her mystic sensibility and her passion for analysis.

"God, if He exists, could not be offended by my doubts, which are only an admission of my ignorance. I keep myself strictly from denying the existence of God and I cannot sincerely and unemotionally affirm it. Oh, in the terrible moments, I am not so rational;

I fall on my knees and invoke this God, of whom then I am sure!" (January 1881.) "If He did not exist, why this universal need to adore Him, among all peoples and in all times? Is it possible that *nothing* responds to these aspirations, which are innate in all men, to this instinctive seeking of the supreme being, the great master, God?" (August 29, 1883.) "When this supreme refuge is lacking, one has nothing left but to die. Without God there can be no poetry, no tenderness, no genius, love, or ambition." "My God, why dost Thou permit me to reason? I should so like to believe unconditionally." (June 28, 1884.)

The conversations with God are of daily occurrence. As she feels weaker, more skeptical, as she sees the accelerated progress of her disease, after she has lost successively her voice, her hearing, her power to work, her supplications become cries of revolt. Not only does God not aid her, He brings new pressure to destroy her. She would be satisfied with His "neutrality". "In moments of misery or of joy, deep down in me the first thought is for this God who is so cruel to me." (June 28, 1884.) In the last weeks of her life, as she already has the vision of her ap-

proaching death, she recognizes the necessity of taking a definite attitude toward heaven, but her mind is overwhelmed with contrary reasons, objections. She contents herself with praying every night "in spite of reason"—this, just six weeks before her death.

What shall we conclude, if not that, spiritually, as intellectually and sentimentally, Marie is tormented with the same fervor, the same impatience, the same inquietude, the same terrified obsession of non-existence? She expresses herself almost in the same terms when she fears the absence of the divine realities and when she deplores the insufficiencies of her earthly realizations. Her whole life is always the same violent and dolorous flight toward a superhumanity which by turns appears to her in an immense light or hides itself in a sinister mist.

If Marie has so long searched herself, in all the phases of intellect, of sentiment, and of faith, how shall we discover her at the first glance? Even in this schematic study of a moral life, in this attempt at synthesis, it has not been possible for us to reconcile all the contrasts, and perhaps the entire truth about this creature has not yet appeared. To understand

and know Marie Bashkirtseff completely it will be necessary to compose the final aspect of this touching figure at the instant when death removes from all faces the masks of life.

CHAPTER VII

How She Died

A NIGHT IN MAY

A COLOR, an air, a perfume, a memory, suffice to take us back into an epoch, to bring before us a face, to revive a voice. One night in May, I went to the rue Ampère, at the hour when the noises of Paris are unheard in this peaceful quarter. The beautiful residence, in which all life formerly centered about the white figure of Marie, is still there, in its closed garden, among its great surviving trees. The tall windows of the studio were dark as the moonless night. A light filtered from a window of what was formerly Marie's bedroom. There was in the odor of bush and tree a bit of perfume as of violets, as of the violet essence which Marie loved to have always about her. The clock of the little church nearby in the rue Bremontier struck its silvery note, as it has struck for half a century. A sound, a light, a perfume; and the past which this

book is attempting to recapture was revived for me in one of its most poignant instants.

1884, a night in May. In the bedroom where all is white—furniture, curtains, carpet, the ermine wrap tossed on the slender bed, the delicate lingerie flung on the *chaise-longue*—the young girl who is soon to die contemplates her naked body. For the harmonious white vision in the mirror, Marie has not now, as formerly, the intoxicated gaze of Narcissus adoring his image. No smile in the eyes, which have become dark with their seriousness. The little Kalmuk face is thoughtful, tense. With a sudden gesture, Moussia has tossed back over her shoulders the luminous disorder of her hair. Her hands stray over her flesh; the arms are not firm now as they still were a year ago, the shoulder is less round, the small breasts have no longer the marble rigidity and the brusque protuberance at which the young artist marveled a short time ago. The thighs have stylized. The muscles of the knee can be seen. At this date, in this month of May of the fatal year, the signs of destruction are not as yet visible. This smooth body, enveloped by voluptuous hair like that of a Magdalen, has not become perceptibly thinner,

is still the body of a beautiful woman very much alive.

The house is wrapped in darkness. It is warm, even hot in this secret refuge of the maiden. There is a fire in the fireplace and the flames make too fair the fair silhouette, which without the gold of the hair, the vigorous color of the lips, eyebrows and eyes, would vanish into the snowy symphony of the decorative scheme.

A shadow passes, rustling the silks; it places a brand on the fire, picks up a peignoir of soft wool. A presence in this sacred solitude? It is only Rosalie, with her ten years' devotion, in her sorrowing vigil. With this creature Marie does what she wishes. According to the humor of her mistress Rosalie is silent or voluble. The young artist has many times sketched this amusing gypsy head, these black eyes very close together. Rosalie dresses and undresses Moussia, accompanies her whenever she goes out, serves her as a model, receives her confidences, administers to her at night, watches over her, keeps her awake or puts her to sleep with stories which she picks up one knows not where. She also scolds with tender brusquerie, but when "Chérie" is in her days of

violence, this maid has a disarming manner of kneeling, of submitting herself, of playing the slave. Now she draws the great peignoir of white wool over the shivering shoulders.

"You do not know, Rosalie? I shall die this year."

Rosalie does not answer. Rosalie never answers when such things are said to her. Only the grave hushed notes of Marie's voice break the silence. She knows quite well that all will be over in some months: the past year the cards have told her that she will die this year in the month of October; she has consumption and "it gallops"; she has fever every night, and nevertheless she blisters her chest as she has been ordered; she takes arsenic, goats' milk, all that is wished. These remedies will not prolong her life.

"I shall die in six months."

Rosalie gazes incredulously at the supple figure, draped in wool, which lies outstretched on the bear skin at the foot of the bed. The little Kalmuk face, supported by the burning hands which are thinner, much reduced, has lost its coloring. François Coppée, who was received in the house the preceding week,

will retain the memory of "a gracious pale young girl". Is this disturbing and unmanageable child as ill as she says? Are the distressing scenes of the last three years to be gone through again?

The clock of the church in the rue Bremontier strikes eleven, lightly, discreetly, with the elegance of a social bell.

"You must go to bed, mademoiselle."

"I am sicker in bed than up. I have a head full of incoherent things. I say imbecile words. This is delirium. I do not say so to make you cry, Rosalie. After all, I am probably joking. And then, you see, I am at an age when one finds a thrill even in dying. . . ."

THE LAST REALITY

ONE day in her childhood, Marie, traveling for the first time on a train, had so arranged her small baggage as to occupy two seats. When two travelers entered the compartment, the child said, "These places are taken." "Very well," is the answer, "I will call the conductor." The little girl had not believed the threat would be carried out

—she was used to threats at home. She felt "a strange chill" come over her when the guard took her things off the seats and the traveler sat down opposite her. Thus "the first reality" presented itself to the imagination and sensibility of the girl. Is the last reality to manifest itself similarly? For long, Marie has known, yet not believed, that she must die young. "*Die* is a word which one says and writes easily, but to think, to *believe* that one is going to die soon? Do I believe it? No, but I *fear* it." She takes account of her alarming physical condition which is disguised by all the appearance of health. The two lungs, especially the right, have long been ravaged. She coughs, she spits blood. She no longer refuses to take medicine, but what can medicine do now? And she will not consent to diminish the activity which is burning up her life. Indeed never did she study more, accomplish more, never was she more purposeful, than just before the end. The great flare of light before the fire goes out. Think of all that this year represents for Marie, this year 1884 which for her will end in autumn. Her worth as an artist has been established by the success of her picture in the Salon. She knows how she wishes to handle "The Holy

Women", which she considers her masterpiece. She has made great progress in the preparation of another picture: "The Apple Tree", or "April", working under conditions murderous in her state of health, in a damp orchard at Sèvres. She has projected and undertaken other pictures in which she tries to express the reality of the street as Jules Bastien-Lepage has expressed the reality of the fields. After her successes at the Russian embassy, she has been received, without reserve, into Parisian society, which has been so charmed by her seductive and dominant personality as to consider her presence indispensable to any brilliant gathering. Finally, she has experienced the birth of a new sentiment which is completely without calculation or ambition, and which the circumstances of a double fatality are to render infinitely noble and touching: her affection for Jules Bastien-Lepage, that affection around which a legend has been woven, less beautiful, certainly, than the reality.

"THE PRIMITIVE"

HE was called "the Primitive". He was passionately and simply genuine. He had the love of life, of light, of the fresh air. It has been said that what won him completely to the primitives was the care they took to associate the little things of nature with the great scenes of humanity, to sow the path of virgins with flowers of the field, to give a place, in their naïve compositions, to familiar animals. His father, an instinctive artist, had taught him to observe. As a school boy, sketching idly on the margin of Vergil and Tacitus, he had amazed the drawing teacher, who had advised him to follow art as a profession. When he finished school, Jules Bastien-Lepage came to Paris. He had to earn his bread by working at night in a post-office, while studying by day at the Beaux-Arts. After six months of this impossible existence, his health had become so poor that he had had to give up the job in the post-office. In the Atelier Cabanel true greatness was predicted of the artist who was not classical enough to obtain the Prix de Rome with his "Adora-

tion of the Shepherds", but who already had received from the public the approbation refused by the official jury. In the ten years from 1873 to 1883 he executed "The Springtime", "The Haymakers", "Women Digging Potatoes", "Joan of Arc Listening to her Voices", "The Beggar", "Père Jacques", "Love in the Village", "The Forge", the admirable portraits of his grandfather, of his parents, of Monsieur Hayem, of Sarah Bernhardt, and grew steadily in fame and power. He gave true expression to his profound feeling for the country, reproduced livingly the familiar sights which remained always before his eyes: Damvillers, his native hamlet, with its scattered houses and the tranquil brook which winds through the fields and among the willows, the paternal house, with its yellow front and its gray shutters, the kitchen with its high fireplace, its copper pots, its colored faïence, and, outdoors again, the fields, the horizons, the country folk, harvesters, reapers, peddlers, washerwomen, beggars, and even that Joan of Arc, a true Lorraine peasant girl, the product of a Lorraine village and not of a studio.

His art was to be true, to paint what he knew and loved, to hate artifice and convention, to be natural

in the presence of nature, to fix on the canvas the actual light of the sun, the real atmosphere of the country. Without doubt the realism of Bastien-Lepage has been surpassed, exaggerated, transformed, and the noise made over the impressionists who came a little later has drowned out the tumult aroused by the boldness of "the primitive of 1875". But the young master, when he was the idol of Marie Bashkirtseff, had already broken the path for a school whose adepts he was not to know and who were to reorient the art of painting in a direction entirely different from that followed unquestioningly by a Julian and a Robert-Fleury.

When Marie Bashkirtseff saw Jules Bastien-Lepage for the first time, the artist was thirty-four years old, but he appeared ten years younger. Small, sinewy, very frank, very neat, with blond hair cut "Breton fashion", turned up nose, the light sparse beard of an adolescent, Jules Bastien-Lepage, without being handsome, was extremely engaging. He had twinkling blue eyes. His voice was soft; his wit, of which he had a good deal, was never employed to give offense. He possessed the infinite charm of the person who has a value, a force, and who knows it,

without being vain. He was such a good fellow that one wished at once to become his comrade. He was also deeply considerate and had a profound tact. Jules Bastien had paid Marie the highest compliment she could desire: he had not treated her like a society girl dabbling in art, he had given her the comforting impression that he saw in her a comrade, an equal.

Previously we have spoken of the influence of Jules Bastien-Lepage on the work of Marie Bashkirtseff. Moussia's admiration for the young master of Damvillers certainly surpassed, by its exalted character, all her other fervors.

Is the artist criticized? She sees him at once haloed by persecution, he is "the greatest of all the moderns; in no museum has she seen landscapes comparable to his; he makes one breathe the air of the night; he puts one into a revery before his sky". He has made a portrait of himself—"one reads his genius in his face". For he is "a pure genius". "Velasquez painted like him, but was only an intelligent painter, while Jules Bastien is a sublime artist." There is in his compositions an observation which recalls that of Balzac. There is not technique

but nature itself, a miracle of realization. "Ah, the sinister idiots, who treat him as a technician. He is a priest, a philosopher, a creator. The others are fabricators of no matter what, compared with him. One can look at nothing else when one sees his painting, because it is true as life."

She admires without measure. Friendship must naturally complete the admiration. But what was this friendship, and was it only friendship?

The legend of the love of Marie Bashkirtseff for Jules Bastien-Lepage originated in the publication, in an incomplete form, of the Diary, in which, during her last two years, the name of the great artist recurs on almost every page, while the names of persons whom Marie saw more often and more intimately are not even cited. André Theuriet and Maurice Barrès entwined the names of Bastien and Marie in widely read articles, and it must be said also that in the pages of the intimate notebooks recently revealed by Monsieur Pierre Borel, Marie has fixed some impressions which take a very romantic turn. When she sees Bastien, at Ville-d'Avray, paint the room in which Gambetta died, she employs an avowed coquetry to let him divine an emotion

which glorifies him. She says somewhere that she definitely accepts the painter "for subject of all her reveries"; she asks herself if she is not going to fall seriously in love with him; she writes sadly that he will never love her and that she takes a pleasure, very sweet, very tender, indefinable, in being near him. These words would lend themselves easily to confusion. But one must not read into them more meaning than Marie herself intended to give them, and it is an opportune moment to remind ourselves that the author of the Diary has several times put us on our guard against the excessive ardor of he written words. The truth is that Marie felt for Jules Bastien, for the great artist and the admirable man, a sentiment which might resemble love, but which was not love. We must note here one of the traits of Marie Bashkirtseff's intellectual sensibility. She had always dreamed of a close, confiding friendship with a distinguished person outside her own mediocre environment in which she felt very lonely. This explains her attempts to establish correspondence with artists and writers, Maupassant for example, Sully-Prudhomme, and even Émile Zola, whose talent she exalted with her customary ardor.

The urge which carried Marie Bashkirtseff toward Jules Bastien-Lepage was assuredly more powerful. Amorous friendship? Perhaps. The surviving friends and comrades of Marie Bashkirtseff believe that that is what it was. Thus we have established the truth without robbing the legend of its gracious quality. There is nothing more romantic than an amorous friendship. A young woman's affection for a young man almost always carries with it that tender manner, that tendency to jealous exclusiveness, which characterize sentiments more frankly passionate. And what a priceless thing it is when it can exist, this loyal, confiding, rational tenderness, not completely uninfluenced by a vague sexual attraction, but freed of the tyranny of the senses, of fear of aggression and necessity for defense, and implying that reasoned esteem, that moral admiration which are irrelevant to the sensual blindness of love. Amorous friendship is a rare perfume, permeating and lasting. Love is something else, less or more, better or worse, but different. We have seen Marie on three occasions, as child, adolescent, and young woman, in the illusioned, duped, tormented character of the woman in love. We shall see her, in her last days, in

the divine rôle of the friend. Her friendship will have the romantic quality of all that proceeds from a soul profoundly moved, the grandeur of all that is under the shadow of death.

THE SUPREME IDYLL

ALL the month of June 1884 Marie has been working laboriously in an orchard at Sèvres, where she has a peasant girl posing under an apple tree in blossom. The model is not of the best. Marie does nothing she wants to do and every day she is seized by the desire to slash the canvas with her knife.

At the end of the month, when the picture is finished, Moussia receives a piece of news which arouses her anxiety. Jules Bastien-Lepage, after a stay in Algeria, where he had vainly hoped to renew his failing health, has just returned to Paris. The next day Marie and her mother drive to the rue Legendre. "Well! Back again!" How changed he is, transformed almost beyond recognition. Is his malady then so serious and does he realize how serious it is? She rallies him, so as not to appear too

moved, upon an imaginary embonpoint. He, forcing himself to be gay, speaks of "The Meeting" and congratulates her on the way the public has received it. "Don't worry about medals; success is sufficient." He compliments Marie on her dress and even on her umbrella handle. He has her sit at his feet on the *chaise longue.* When she leaves him she is distressed to have seen him so ravaged; she has a maternal feeling, very calm, very tender, of which she is as proud as if it were a power. He will recover, she "wants him" to recover. Poor child!

"You will come back and see me soon?" he begs.

Will she come back!

Day after next she returns. She has brought him a basket of strawberries which she herself has gathered in the garden at Sèvres, with "all sorts of delicacies and coquettish things". The following days, always accompanied by her mother, she goes to the rue Legendre, a bit hesitant, nevertheless, because she fears the interpretation which might be given to the frequency of her visits. But at once she reproaches herself for this reserve, this petty conflict. "I must go there simply as a comrade, as an admirer, as a good fellow, because he is very ill."

For even yet Marie gives no one the impression of being as gravely menaced by her malady as Bastien-Lepage is by his. The frequent visitors to the home in the rue Ampère have never ceased to see her active, industrious, social. Just a few days ago, June seventh, her filmy dress of white muslin has been admired at the reception of the Russian embassy where she appeared, "with roses in her cheeks as at Nice and Rome". She has forbidden her friends to worry about her health, above all to speak of it to their acquaintances; she implores them to spare her "poor maidenly vanity". However, July third, Doctor Potain wishes to send Marie to the Eaux-Bonnes. He gives her a letter for his colleague at the health resort. Marie opens the letter. It says that "Mademoiselle Bashkirtseff has a cavity at the right apex" and that "she is the most undisciplined and imprudent invalid in the world." "He is so optimistic," Marie notes, "that I must be very low?" And she goes to see "the little doctor in the rue de l'Échiquier" who first revealed to her the gravity of her state, and who appears greatly alarmed by the progress of the disease. He takes her to Professor Grancher. Régimens now are useless.

Marie divines all that is not told her. So, as she had predicted, the end was to come in autumn? With her courageous reason she looks death square in the face. She prepares for the great journey from which one does not return, and makes her will.

The next day, July fifth, Moussia goes to the rue Legendre, very pretty, very simply gowned in gray with a waist made like a studio blouse, a great bow of old lace on her hat. Madame Bastien-Lepage, that gentle and fine woman, whom every one called "the little mother", is there. Aided by Marie, she serves the invalid his light repast. Madame Bashkirtseff offers to cut his hair, which has become very long. He laughs, he consents. And now his face seems less stricken, almost cheerful. He seems better. The appearance is deceptive.

"You do not know," says Marie, "that I have a pretty little nanny goat?"

"You keep her at home?"

"Yes. And every day this pretty little nanny goat gives me excellent milk which the doctors have ordered me to take. Oh yes, I have doctors, Potain, Grancher, and a little doctor in the rue de l'Échiquier

who does not know who I am and brutally tells me the truth."

And as Jules Bastien looks at her with astonishment:

"Yes, great artist. Imagine, I am dangerously ill myself. Oh, I have been for a long time. I have the habit. Now tell me, do you want some of the milk of my pretty little nanny goat?"

The patient is tempted.

"Of course I'd like it, but——"

"What, you do not wish us to be suckled by the same nurse?"

And there is badinage about this fraternity which calls up childish associations.

Jules Bastien smiles and accepts the offer. Every day he sends his servant to the rue Ampère. And the milk of the little white nanny goat gives some life to these two invalids who will both be dead within five months.

In these dramatic circumstances some one soon becomes uneasy over the touching friendship. Bastien-Lepage has made a conquest of which he is quite proud, a society woman, a foreigner who possesses a luxurious residence, a stable of race horses,

and who boasts of her intimacy with the famous young artist. This woman is jealous. Perhaps, as Marie believes, she has manifested some vexation at the visits of the young girl who is sufficiently exclusive, even in her friendships, to make this attachment appear intolerable to the "Gioconda with dyed hair" as Moussia disdainfully names her.

Witticisms, pointed shafts, even now? Ah yes, until the end. Besides, because of the illusion frequent in this malady, she believes herself better. "It is like a surge of life welling up in me," she says. During all the month of July, and even during the first half of the month of August, she dashes about Paris in a cab with Rosalie at five in the morning to find models in the street who will pose for a group of outcasts and vagabonds on a public bench. Often when she works, her head spins, she becomes unable to see. She continues to struggle on, but with flagging energy, and the twelfth of August she writes in her Diary that she really has been on the point of capitulating. Bastien-Lepage, whom she continues to visit, has no idea what she is undergoing. A meat powder ordered by the doctor is repulsive to him. Marie, to encourage him—and there is merit in this action,

because we know that she herself has a horror of medicines and all that resembles them—has taken some of this powder in front of him, as one would do to encourage a child. The nature of her attachment for the invalid becomes defined: "It seems to me that it is a very great, a very profound tenderness. I should like to be there always. And when his face contracts, I should like to take his hand and remain thus hours on end. He looks so unhappy, so like a child, with his beautiful gentle eyes, and one would like to take his head in one's arms to cuddle him. Yes, that is the tender and sad dream. I went to sleep crying."

She takes him a little pillow, "just big enough for a child". The slip is made of two of her handkerchiefs, and Marie has embroidered a J on it.

Another day, in the middle of August, she looks long at the invalid's gray eyes which resemble hers, rapt eyes, "which have seen Joan of Arc".

"I have been little understood," he murmurs without bitterness.

"You have been understood by all who are not brutes. Your Joan of Arc makes one think things that one cannot tell you to your face."

She knows that he likes to see women in their finery, so when she goes to visit him though she is almost sinking with weariness, she makes veritable efforts to please him. She dresses "as for a hundred persons" and seems to look well by force of will. She orders special gowns to wear to the rue Legendre. Does the poor artist realize what this touching child is doing to give his eyes a last joy? We do not know. He thinks she is nice, he is glad to see her. But some one quite close to him, his mother, does not fail to see the trouble she is taking in her kindness. When the girl appears now, Madame Bastien-Lepage takes her in her arms and, sobbing, calls her "My dear little Marie."

I do not know if you feel as I do, but it seems to me that now everything becomes very beautiful, very great, about this pair; I am profoundly stirred by the words, the gestures, the expressions of these two condemned to death. These lives about to be extinguished are very lofty. They have graces which are no longer on parade and which give a new value to our humanity. Lepage assembles all his shattered strength to receive this artist as an artist. He speaks of projected pictures which will never be executed,

but he describes them with a lyrical fervor, and one of these pictures is to represent the interment of a young girl. To hear better, Marie has sat quite near the patient, her elbows on the cover. But when he questions her about her own work, Moussia becomes indifferent. For the first time in a long time, talk about herself upsets her, bores her, humiliates her. What would she like in these instants of emotional anguish? Simply a word, a gaze of tenderness. She devotes herself, she suffers, and she is a woman. And she will remain so much a woman as to be a bit jealous, to feel a sort of revolt when "the much traveled lady with the dyed hair," "the false Gioconda," "the Ophelia in the best of health," sends to the rue Legendre a little box of strawberries and a bouquet of edelweiss.

August twenty-second, Marie learns from the etcher Baude, Bastien's dearest comrade, the terrible news which the doctors must certainly have communicated to the family already: "There is no more hope." Condemned to death! Marie, in extreme disorder of thought, tries to find herself. At the moment she does not completely realize what she feels. She is dazed as at the death of her good Doctor Walitzky.

Is she stricken? Is she absorbed by the frightful idea of death, which she seems unable to comprehend, except in connection with herself. All the confused thoughts which have tormented her brain are now concentrated on this dread fact: Bastien-Lepage, the great artist, the great friend, is going to die. She will be harassed every day by this frightful thought. She is already "gathered into herself, her head sunk down between her shoulders," and she awaits the blow.

Doubtless, it is for that reason that she hesitates to go to the rue Legendre. Fear? Perhaps. She seeks a diversion. She begins a study of a child in the nude. She is nervous and irritable at home. She avoids speaking of the rue Legendre. But when she is asked to come keep the patient and his mother company in the absence of his brother the architect, who is taking a day of rest at the home of friends, the girl goes at once.

The next day, again, she is with them in the Bois, to which the patient is transported in her carriage. They go again the following days. She thinks of amusing pranks, prepares chocolate at the water side. She is a mother of twenty-three for this child

of thirty-six, a mother who sits on the grass beside this feeble boy, and has him tell her stories which bring back a cheerful expression to his face drawn with suffering, stories of the war in which Jules served, enlisting at seventeen. In taking care of her patient, she forgets herself completely. He likes to see her drape herself in a black shawl, covering her head, and, because she amuses him thus, she is terribly imprudent. "It rained, and I stood there with the assurance of a girl of sixteen, under the downpour, with my hair coming out of curl." In the evening she coughs so hard as nearly to drive "her mothers" mad. It is at such times that she notes in her Diary: "This is the moment to believe in God and pray to Him. I shall meet my end in six weeks . . . die at twenty-four, on the threshold of everything!"

Nevertheless, the rides in the Bois continue. Marie takes Jules Bastien in her coupé, while Madame Bashkirtseff and Madame Bastien-Lepage go back to Paris in another carriage. The girl sometimes hesitates to make this daily effort which exhausts her. But always she goes, and we find these words in her intimate notebook: "Only a coward would not go

to see a poor friend who suffers so." "We are his friends, he loves us, he esteems me, he loves me, I interest him," the poor girl notes again under the date of September thirteenth, in her Diary, which now is to be kept up for little more than a month.

Thus does Marie appear to us approaching the end. If she has vexed us, angered us, or simply made us smile by certain of her remarks or certain of her actions, let us hasten to pardon her everything because of this heroic self-sacrifice, this triumph of sensibility over imagination, in which appears, in its purest form, the divinity of woman.

September. What is happening?

The malady has become suddenly more grave. That of Jules? That of Marie? The first suffers so much that he cries aloud with the pain. The second continues to smile, to bear up, to protect. But how pale and reduced she is! While making a drawing for *Figaro* the second of September, she has had cruel interruptions. She cannot rest, she has an atrocious fever. Bastien, one day, as they are getting into the carriage to return from the Bois, senses that she is shivering all over. "He wants to cure me of

my cough and he buttons my jacket." This dying man has his moments of solicitude. During one of Marie's visits, when the doctor comes to examine his patient, Bastien-Lepage implores Moussia to consult him about herself. The girl shakes her head sadly. The next day she realizes that she is quite without strength, that her eyesight has begun to fail. All the same she goes to take Jules Bastien to the Bois, brings him back to the rue Legendre, and, when he has gone to bed, puts him to sleep, stroking his head as if he were a child.

Now the double drama is reaching its denouement. We must cite these lines of the Diary which will admit of no substitute here:

"*Wednesday, October 1, 1884.* He is going, and he suffers very much. When one is there one is detached from earth; he already floats above us; there are days when I feel like that, too. One sees people, they speak to one, one answers, but one is no longer on earth; a tranquil indifference, not painful, somewhat like an opium dream. In other words, he is dying. I go there only by habit. It is his ghost; I too am half a ghost. What is the use?

"He does not particularly feel my presence, I am

useless. I have not the power of making his eyes animated. He is glad to see me. That is all." . . . "It is all over, all over now. I shall be buried in 1885. . . ."

"*Thursday, October 9.* Yesterday I began to dress myself to go to the Bois and twice I was ready to give up. I was without strength. But I got there, just the same. . . ."

"*Sunday, October 12.* I was not able to go out. I am quite ill, though not in bed.

"The doctor has been coming every other day. Potain was here once and now he sends me his sub-Potain.

"Oh my God, my God, my picture, my picture!

"Julian came to see me. So they have told him I am ill.

"Alas, how hide it? And how go to Bastien-Lepage?"

"*Thursday, October 16.* I have terrible fevers which exhaust me. I spend the whole day in the drawing room changing from armchair to sofa and back.

"Dina reads novels to me. Potain came yesterday, he will come again tomorrow. This man does not

need the money, and if he comes many times it is because he has a bit of interest in me."

Marie can no longer go out. The disease, finally, has triumphed over her bewildering energy. Her physique is vanquished, but not yet her brain nor her heart. The girl's thought travels ceaselessly toward the rue Legendre. What is becoming of her poor invalid? The last time she saw him he seemed dazed, unaware. . . .

Then there is a scene of simple tragedy, of heroic beauty. The dying man of the rue Legendre has himself brought to the bedside of the dying woman of the rue Ampère.

"He has himself brought here, sinks into an armchair, his legs stretched out on cushions; I, quite near, in another armchair, and like that until six o'clock.

"I am a *mélange* of lace, of plush, everything white, but different tones of white; Bastien-Lepage's eyes dilate with pleasure:

" 'Oh, if I could paint!' he says.

"And I! . . ."

"*Saturday, October 18.* Bastien-Lepage comes al-

most every day. His mother has returned and all three of them came.

"Potain came yesterday. I am not getting better."

"*Sunday, October 19.* Tony and Julian to dinner."

"*Monday, October 20.* In spite of magnificent weather Bastien-Lepage comes here instead of going to the Bois. He can hardly walk; his brother supports him by both arms, almost carries him.

"And once in the armchair the poor fellow is exhausted. God's pity on us! Émile is an admirable brother. It is he who carries Jules up and down their four flights of stairs. I have an equal devotion from Dina. For two days my bed has been in the drawing room; but as the room is very big and broken up by screens, chairs, and the piano, one does not notice it. I have too hard a time going up the stairs. . . ."

The Diary ends here. We are within eleven days of her death.

THE LIGHT GOES OUT

NO more daily notes. Ah, if the dying woman, by a miracle, had retained her facul-

ties of observation and self-description until the very moment when, it is said, human beings see from the other side, unprecedented pages would permit us to accompany Moussia to the very threshold of that unknown to which we cannot even give a name.

I have made an effort to penetrate the shadow surrounding those last eleven days in which the drama reaches its climax. I have always considered the career of Marie Bashkirtseff as a tragedy in which the heroine, the maiden, was the prize of a conflict between the rivals life and death. Does not Marie Bashkirtseff herself give the impression of favoring alternately the one and then the other? "My God! give me the life I wish or let me die!" (July 13, 1876.) "I wish to have all that God has permitted me to glimpse and to understand. If I am not worthy to have it I shall die. For God, not being able without injustice to grant me everything, will not be so cruel as to keep alive an unhappy woman to whom He has given comprehension and the possessive desire for what she comprehends." (June 13, 1876.) And again: "In everything I have dreamed larger than lifesize. If my dream is not to be realized, it is better to die." But there is pose in these utterances

which perhaps are without conviction, and we turn to these passionate words: "You think that I am going to die! Fools that you are! I adore life as it is, with the tears, the rending sorrows which God sends me." "I regard all things as so many divertisements. I want to live. It would be cruel to make me die when I am so easily pleased."

In proportion as death becomes stronger than life, Marie becomes attached to her sorely beset existence, which prolongs itself by miracle. "Ah, how short life is! Ah, how miserable one is to live so little!"

October twenty-first, Marie is so weak that she can hold a pen no longer. Closed is the white box in which are the eighty, the hundred notebooks of the Diary, all the lasting literary work of Marie Bashkirtseff, the living book, happy and unhappy, made of thought, of flesh and blood, almost a human being! Marie receives no more visitors. The mirror has shown the havoc wrought by the disease. She will tell us no more about herself. But others have retained the recollection of her last moments, and their testimony will permit me to finish this book.

Imagine a small, shivering figure, wrapped in white wool, almost disappearing among the cushions

of a vast armchair. The patient can no longer lie in her bed where at once she suffocates. She speaks little. She has the long silences of exhaustion, and tears are seen to roll from her eyes.

Perhaps her whole life flits dream-like through her mind: her childhood at Tcherniakoff where there was a little billiard table for little Mouchka; the happy days in Nice, the Duke, the Three Graces, the terrace covered with roses, the team of white ponies; Pietro and the masks of Rome. . . . Naples and the Count Bijou. . . . Paris, love perhaps, the real, the great. . . . No, the striving after glory, the painting school. . . . Julian, Tony, Breslau. . . . the Holy Russia of Kieff whose relics kill instead of curing. . . . Spain, Velasquez. . . . The living light, Bastien-Lepage. . . . "The Meeting". . . . "The Holy Women"—the holy women before the tomb . . . before the tomb!

It is wrong to say that death is the same for everybody. There are those who meet in resignation and fatalism the end of resigned and fatalistic lives. Leon Chestov, citing the case of the moujik Nikita in Tolstoy's "Master and Man", speaks of those who have lived without will and who accept death

peaceably as they have accepted everything else. This calm submission which in its gray monotony blends with the surrounding world and obeys the eternal laws, does not make a lasting impression upon us. Others go with that great hope which is given them by unlimited faith in happiness beyond. Ah! if Marie could at least have the certitude of an invisible life which would be an extension of the life one sees! But she has been too much the questioner and analyzer; she is fundamentally too Renanian to have any assurance that the mediocre priests of her faith, whose timid visits she receives, have messages of truth for her. She has a terror of that eternal night which is incomprehensible to human beings. She cannot accustom herself to the idea of that approaching silence, of that abandon, of that cold desert, of that infinite nothingness. What can we know of those supreme hours in which there is nothing to do but to wait, to lose gradually, gradually, warmth, consciousness, life?

The mother has spoken. Surviving friends have given me the memories which I collect for this story's end. Jules Bastien-Lepage, I have been told, made a last visit the twenty-second or twenty-third

of October. The words which were exchanged between these two specters have not been reported. Doubtless there were heroic banalities, and at the leave-taking, an "*au revoir*" which to the loved ones present had the heart-breaking sound of a final farewell.

October twenty-fifth, Marie spoke of her interrupted work which was not to be continued. Dina had the courage to laugh, and with moist eyes and a catch in her throat, to rally her with studio slang.

The night of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth of October Marie was worse. She had that delirium in which all objects assume fantastic shapes. Rosalie and Madame Bashkirtseff watched over her until day.

In the morning, Marie's head was clear. She asked her cousin to go out and buy her some books. Dina brought back "Miss Harriett", by Guy de Maupassant and "*Les Ridicules du Temps*", by Barbey d'Aurevilly.

In the afternoon Marie wanted to have a page of Michelet read to her. But almost at once she dozed, then the fever seized her again. That night, she

asked for some cherries. At the end of October, this whim would not be easy to satisfy.

"You shall have cherries tomorrow," Madame Bashkirtseff said. "I promise you."

The next day a little cherry tree covered with its hothouse fruit was presented to the delighted invalid.[1]

"You see," said her mother, "we can do everything for you. Miracles are possible and we shall cure you soon."

Now the newspapers carried the announcements of the awards of the Prix de Rome. Marie had an illustrated journal brought to her and saw the reproduction in it of Monsieur Pinta's "*La Mort de Lucrèce*", the Grand Prix in painting for that year.

The twenty-seventh or twenty-eighth of October, Madame Canrobert presented herself at the home in the rue Ampère to inquire about the invalid. Visitors were not permitted to enter the sick room. But when Marie knew who was there, she asked at once to see la Maréchale, whom she liked very much. The poor child had become unrecognizable. Extraor-

[1] Unpublished memoirs of Madame la Baronne de Navacelle (Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert).

dinarily reduced, her face a death mask, her voice indistinct, she was almost invisible in the vast armchair. "My mother," says Madame la Baronne de Navacelle (Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert), "came home overwhelmed. It must have been frightful for Marie to think that her work was to remain unfinished. And too she was very lonely, in spite of the adoration of her mother and aunt and the devotion of Dina, who could alleviate her sufferings only materially."

Madame Bashkirtseff, in spite of the doctors, refused, until the last moment, to believe death possible. Did Marie herself give up hope? Two or three days before her death she seems to have somewhat recovered her lost voice,[1] and, in this house which already was in mourning, the swan song—very feeble—may have been heard.

The next day the invalid had not enough consciousness to distinguish dream from the waking state. Compassionate nature administers its opiates to those intellects which are too rebellious against destruction. Moussia now was approaching the fatal limit, and she went with the tide. On this last night,

[1] Unpublished recollections of Madame la Générale G. . . .

of the thirtieth and thirty-first of October, the dying girl seemed to come out of the torpor which precedes the sleep without dreams. Doubtless the sound of weeping beside her brought her back a moment among those she loved. The first rays of dawn filtered through the blinds. She looked at the night-light, flickering, very low, at the head of her bed.

"We shall go out together," she murmured.[1]

Pale sunshine the dreary morning of All Saints' Day, when men came to hang with white the façade of the residence in the rue Ampère. An escutcheon over the door bore the initials M. and B. surmounted by a coronet, the symbol which Marie used to seal her correspondence.

In those days there were few people passing along the streets early in the mornings in this quiet district. A servant, going out of the house where all windows were closed, all blinds drawn, saw two women stop before the funereal decoration. One of them asked,

"Who is this young girl who has died?"

[1] Recollections of Madame Bashkirtseff, the mother.

THE VOICE WHICH IS NO MORE.

"This is my will and testament.

"Possessing nothing personally, I request my family to execute my wishes, for I have the firm conviction that I shall be obeyed as if I had a fortune of my own.

"I die absolutely pure of heart, mind, and body. I believe I have never had thoughts that were base, mercenary or depraved.

"Since God wishes me to, I pardon the whole world. I ask pardon of no one, having offended no one.

"I wish to be dressed on my death bed in the very fine white wool which I loved in my lifetime. Draperies very simple. Flowers in my hands. The bed, before I am laid on it, shall be covered with a great spread of white brocade which shall trail on the floor. No flowers on the bed nor on the body. There shall be tapers.

"There shall be a sort of chapel constructed for me. Monsieur Émile Bastien-Lepage shall be the architect. It shall be situated near the Champs-Élysées; I insist on this expressly.

"The chapel shall be able to hold forty persons. My portrait in death shall be placed there. There shall also be a fine organ, and once a year, the anniversary of my death, I wish that beautiful sad music be sung there by great artists.

"Around my last dwelling there shall be a garden; let it not be adjoining any edifice. A statue of me shall be placed in the garden and it shall be executed by Monsieur de Saint-Marceaux.

"I wish an annual prize to be founded for the painter

or sculptor, man or woman, less than twenty-five years old, who shall have done the best work.

"Finally, I wish the poor to be relieved in winter as much as possible.

"July 22, 1884.

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF."

A CRY

PARISIANS remember the extraordinary white procession to the Russian church in the rue Daru, which was illuminated as for the funeral of a sovereign. The pupils of the Atelier Julian sent beautiful flowers. In the studio they placed a wreath around the dead girl's palette which long remained hanging on the wall.

It was necessary to inform Jules Bastien-Lepage that his young Russian friend was no longer in this world. The poor artist himself had only five more weeks to live. He buried his face in the pillow and wept.

One of Marie's friends, Mademoiselle Claire Canrobert, who was present at the funeral, has told me, "When the white coffin went out of the house in the rue Ampère, a horrible cry was heard, a cry like that of an animal being slaughtered."

The mother!

THE CHAPEL AND THE WOODEN CROSS

THE architect Émile Bastien-Lepage reared in the cemetery of Passy, as close as possible to the Champs-Élysées, the chapel requested by Marie in her testament.

As long as she lived, Madame Bashkirtseff watched over the sepulcher of her daughter as over something living. The last time she came to kneel in the crypt she was a tottering octogenarian. She said, "I fear I shall not be able to return next year. And yet, I should like to live on. I should like to live to be a hundred years old, for, when I am gone, who will take care of my daughter's glory?"

Madame Bashkirtseff, whose resources had been reduced by the Russian revolution, ended her days in straitened circumstances in the little pavilion of the villa of Nice, which she could not resign herself to sell and where she preserved her treasure of relics, since scattered to all the winds. One by one she had seen her loved ones die, her son Paul, a consumptive also, at the age of forty-two; her grandson Nicholas; her sister Madame Romanoff, nearly bankrupt by

INTERIOR OF THE TOMB OF MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF
in the cemetery at Passy. The painting is an unfinished piece by Marie Bashkirtseff called the Holy Woman. The tomb was built by Bastien Lepage.

gambling, in which she sought a consolation never to be found; finally, Dina, who had married an elderly kinsman, the Count de Toulouse-Lautrec.

One morning the old lady was found dead in the armchair in which Marie herself had breathed her last.

Madame Bashkirtseff had had her tomb prepared, in the chapel of Passy, beside her child. She was actually buried at the gates of Nice, in a poor grave in the Russian cemetery of Caucade, a wooden cross above her.

EPILOGUE

The Charming Shade

THE FADING PORTRAIT

EVERY year I go to the Museum of Nice to see the portrait of Marie Bashkirtseff, which the girl herself painted a year before her death. The picture still attracts, but it has taken on gradually the charm of unreal things. The colors have toned down, the whites are now ivories, the face is fading into the dark background. The ineffable melancholy of this childlike physiognomy augments in proportion as the brilliance of the light tones diminishes. The eyes are no longer of this world. The blonde hair has become truly Ophelian. There is, as it were, a delicate veil of dream between the portrait of this dead girl and the gaze of the living.

The curator of the Museum, Monsieur Bensa, who is the son of Marie's first drawing teacher, drew my attention to a hole in the canvas, above the fading lips.

THE STATUE OF MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF
By the sculptor Tarnowski at the Nice Museum.

"An accident?" I asked.

"No, indeed. Look closely. A bullet. A revolver shot."

I remember that the little house in the rue de Prony into which, after Marie's death, Madame Bashkirtseff moved the furniture of the house in the rue Ampère, was let or lent by her during her absences from Paris. What obscure drama was enacted before this helpless image? What madman or sadist attempted to disfigure it? Let us not seek to know. The portrait of Moussia now occupies a well-lighted room of the Museum, the "Marie Bashkirtseff room", where it is honored, protected, to which there are frequent pilgrimages.

For this compelling figure remains close to us after her death. During all her brief existence, Marie's mind resisted so strongly the idea of annihilation that her end gives us the strange impression of not being completely an end. I do not speak here of a second life according to the Christian revelation. This child, forever in irritated or sorrowful discussion with God, about great things and small, certainly had not the profound faith which gives the hope of reward and resurrection. The beyond in-

trigued her as much as it disturbed her. "Death at least presents this advantage: we shall learn what that famous other life is. Unless there is nothing; and anyway, one knows it, at last, when one dies." This was written May 29, 1884, five months before the end.

One night, during her fifteenth year, Marie had a dream in which she saw herself dead: she was flying high above the earth, with a lyre in her hands. The strings kept coming undone, and she could not succeed in drawing a single sound from them. She was rising all the while. She perceived immense horizons, clouds blue, yellow, red, silver, strangely cloven. There were alternations of drab grayness and dazzling light. She attained finally so great a height that the clouds seemed congealed and heavy like lead. "Everything became vague; I had my lyre in my hand all the time, with its loose strings, and in the distance, under my feet, was a reddish ball, the earth." Thus, to a child's imagination, appeared the great journey of which we know nothing. No mystic sweetness, no vision of angels, no celestial music. But the young girl notes her disturbance at drawing away from this reddish ball, the earth, and

the sadness of the new domain which she enters, a frozen land of leaden clouds. She reminds us somewhat of Ivan Ilyitch, clinging, after death, to an existence that is bad, indeed, but familiar, and resisting the indeterminable forces which drag him into mystery.

Marie goes so far as to ask the living to help her by retaining her among them in mind. "When I am no more," she wrote, March 14, 1878, "practise a bit of spiritism in my honor. Call me and have me speak; remember how I love life and the living. Do not take this as a joke. I urge you to do as I ask; I implore you."

We shall not go further into speculations alien to the scope of our book. Those of our readers who desire to linger on this metaphysical terrain will interrogate the experimental data of Newbold, Myers, Hodgson, Hyslop, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Richer, Camille Flammarion, concluding that there is intervention of forces and intelligences to bring us the testimony of an individualized consciousness in the beyond. Others, more inclined to accept the hypothesis of transformation without memories, will adopt the anesthetic philosophy of Maurice Maeter-

linck, or will let themselves be led by the lyric materialism of Monsieur Adrien Le Corbeau to imagine the survival of Marie in one of those roses of Nice which she loved to wear in her corsage, or one of those April violets whose perfume she loved. Believers, finally, will not forget that this child often prayed, and will think that her lofty moral life, in spite of the inevitable human imperfections, assures her that other life promised by their spiritual revelation. But if Marie Bashkirtseff has given us a lesson of courageous achievement at the great threshold, the insistent and thankful preoccupation of many of us with this charming specter is completely justified.

"YOUNG WRITER OF TODAY"

LET us not yet write "Finis". In addition to the speculations of our intelligence and the dreams of our imagination about the beyond, there is, in the case of Marie Bashkirtseff, something strange and fascinating: the superhuman manifestation of that will which continues to strive toward a goal and which attains that goal after the death of

the person. Marie Bashkirtseff was preoccupied with survival since she began writing the Diary, at the age of twelve or thirteen. She never ceased to bear in mind the warning that she was a short-lived creature. She wished to survive, and she sought all the means of surviving. Hence her feverish haste to realize herself. She had no time to lose, and her effort would be meaningless for her if the results were not to prolong themselves beyond her own day.

The sensations enclosed between the beginning and the end and leaving no trace, these were the preoccupation of this creature rebellious against the constraint of limits. To leave traces after death, to continue herself to infinity perhaps, in spite of death, was the supreme aim of this life so short: "End, be no more? No! Have enough genius to last forever!"

Marie achieved the celebrity which she had wished, and it permits her to remain in contact with the world of the living. "It would be curious," she said, "if the story of my failures were to give me what I seek and still shall seek; but I shall not know. . . ." The Diary, the book of Marie Bashkirtseff, in which one can find substance for ten vol-

umes, has impressed, lastingly, distinguished minds as diverse as those of Gladstone and Maurice Barrès. It has been adopted by an immense public. It must be read completely to be well understood, to be recognized at its full value as a human document, the inexorably sincere monograph of a soul in which one feels all the convulsions and urges of an imprisoned genius. Youth sings, frank, bold, intrepid, through the intellectual discussion of the multiple problems of philosophy and art. These she treats with a charm of vigor and grace which made Barrès say, "One never finds on her a trace of the library dusts which begrime the most celebrated of our contemporaries." Marie has the gift of description. Her pages on the death and funeral of Gambetta present a powerful picture of which all the colors are alive. Her portraits in two or ten lines are of a certain and lasting truth. One is struck by her skill in defining and by the facility with which she tosses off thoughts like sparks of light.

But, above all, she is truthful, cruelly truthful, and often at her own expense. Many times she has manifested disgust for books "with invented situations and falsified characters". She has loved in lit-

erature almost nothing but the realists, and it is a realistic book she has tried to produce, the rigorously faithful transcription of a whole life. "I register, I analyze, I copy the daily life of my person. It is my pride, my self-respect, my interests, my skin, my eyes which suffer, which weep, which rejoice. *I* am there only to watch, to write, to narrate, to reason coldly about all my miseries—I am like a Gulliver contemplating my Lilliputians."

The autobiography, Tolstoy has said somewhere, is the best type of literature. The autobiography, Leon Chestov has retorted, is impossible if we consider it from the standpoint of truth, no one, according to this Russian philosopher, having succeeded in speaking, in a direct form, the truth—even a part of the truth—about himself. This holds good for the Confessions of Saint Augustine as for those of Rousseau, for the Autobiography of Mill as for the Journal of Nietzsche, to which might be added, evidently, the Essays of Montaigne, the Memoirs of Retz, the Confidences of Lamartine, the "History of my Life" of George Sand, the Recollections of Renan, of Loti, or of Anatole France. But the aim of none of these books, except perhaps that of

Rousseau—and we must remember the strictures of Jules Lemaître—was to furnish in a total and pitiless veracity a pure psychological document.

Marie has delivered herself up naked, soul and body, in her Diary. She knew well that its greatest value would derive from the totality of its revelation of a human being. A sketch, a phrase still in rough form, a thought even incompletely expressed, interests us often more than a finished work in which the author will have had time to adapt his expressions to the demands of a public. The thought direct, stripped, attracts and at the same time shocks us, and it is this double impression that many of the readers of Marie Bashkirtseff experience. "To write truthfully the history of one's life," says Leon Chestov again, "to make a complete and sincere confession, that is to say, narrate not what society expects of one, not what society needs, but what really has occurred, that would be to put oneself in the pillory! Society does not pardon those who violate its laws, and its judgment is pitiless." Will Marie be pardoned for not having concealed from us her pride, her faults, her insufficiencies? These scoriæ or lacunæ in her soul appear to us of not

much importance when we begin to make the secret inventory of our own souls. "Be modest," said Jules Renard. "That form of pride is best tolerated."

The Diary of Marie Bashkirtseff is not a Russian book. It is a book of wide humanity. The proof is that Russians are less interested than are readers of other countries in this life story of their compatriot. The French have recognized the double soul, coquettish and serious, of the Parisienne in a great part of these confessions. Anglo-Saxon women have seen themselves in the confessions as in a mirror. In America the feminine friends of this fervent Eve are innumerable. In prudent, reflective, educated Switzerland, Marie has been adopted because of her passion for culture. So also in the countries of the North, where the physical resemblance is added to the intellectual identity.

But the Diary of Marie Bashkirtseff belongs to French letters. It dominates the present literature, egocentristic and cosmopolite, which perhaps it created. If we seek to situate Marie in an epoch, it is to ours that she belongs. She is a "young writer" of today. She is still twenty-three, in this very year in which we live. Her book seems to have appeared

yesterday. It assures her the first rank in the modern generation of writers.

Marie Bashkirtseff takes possession of us because she is a synthesis of the sensibilities, the aspirations, the hopes, the mirages, which are essential to our existence. She has that human illusion that we are created to be happy. Even when sorrow, disappointment, physical pain assail her, she gives herself reasons for loving life, for finding it good although she be in tears. She asks happiness naturally. Nevertheless she would be content "to be miserable on condition of continuing to live". Her body cries out, but something in her and above her rejoices, even in despair. "Life? We are life, life belongs to us, it is all that we have. They say that it is nothing because we have not eternity. Ah the fools!"

Marie Bashkirtseff invested the reason of Minerva and the purity of Diana with the triumphant grace of Psyche. And our grateful imagination raises to her a lasting altar over which the rose shall climb and die in all the glory of its frailty.

END

Paris-Nice-Paris, 1922-1925.

WITHDRAWN FROM THE ENOCH PRATT
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